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ABSTRACT

This report presents the findings of an in-depth qualitative study of issues related to educational equity for migrant, Native American and Hispanic children. Equity is defined as the provision of those resources essential for all students to fully participate in school and later, in society. Data were collected through interviews with 88 staff members, parents, and other key informants in 5 school districts in the Yakima Valley (Washington). The metaphor of a bridge is used to represent the structure that makes it possible for migrant, Native American, and limited-English-proficient students to experience positive educational outcomes. The bridge to these outcomes consists of pillars that support the schools' day-to-day efforts and that schools can influence through their policies. Pillars include parents who support education, parents who are organized, a community that values pluralism, and community-school partnerships. The bridge span consists of conditions that schools can directly control such as parent involvement; a positive multicultural environment; flexible programs that accommodate diversity; programs for Native American, bilingual, and migrant students; support for struggling students; equal access to programs; dropout prevention; supplemental funds; local leadership; strategic planning for equity; ethnically diverse staff; and staff skills and commitments. Sections of this report define the problems in meeting desirable conditions and provide recommendations, including comments from study participants. Appendices include a profile of the Yakima Valley, the background of Indian education programs, and other information relevant to the study. (LP)

BUILDING BRIDGES

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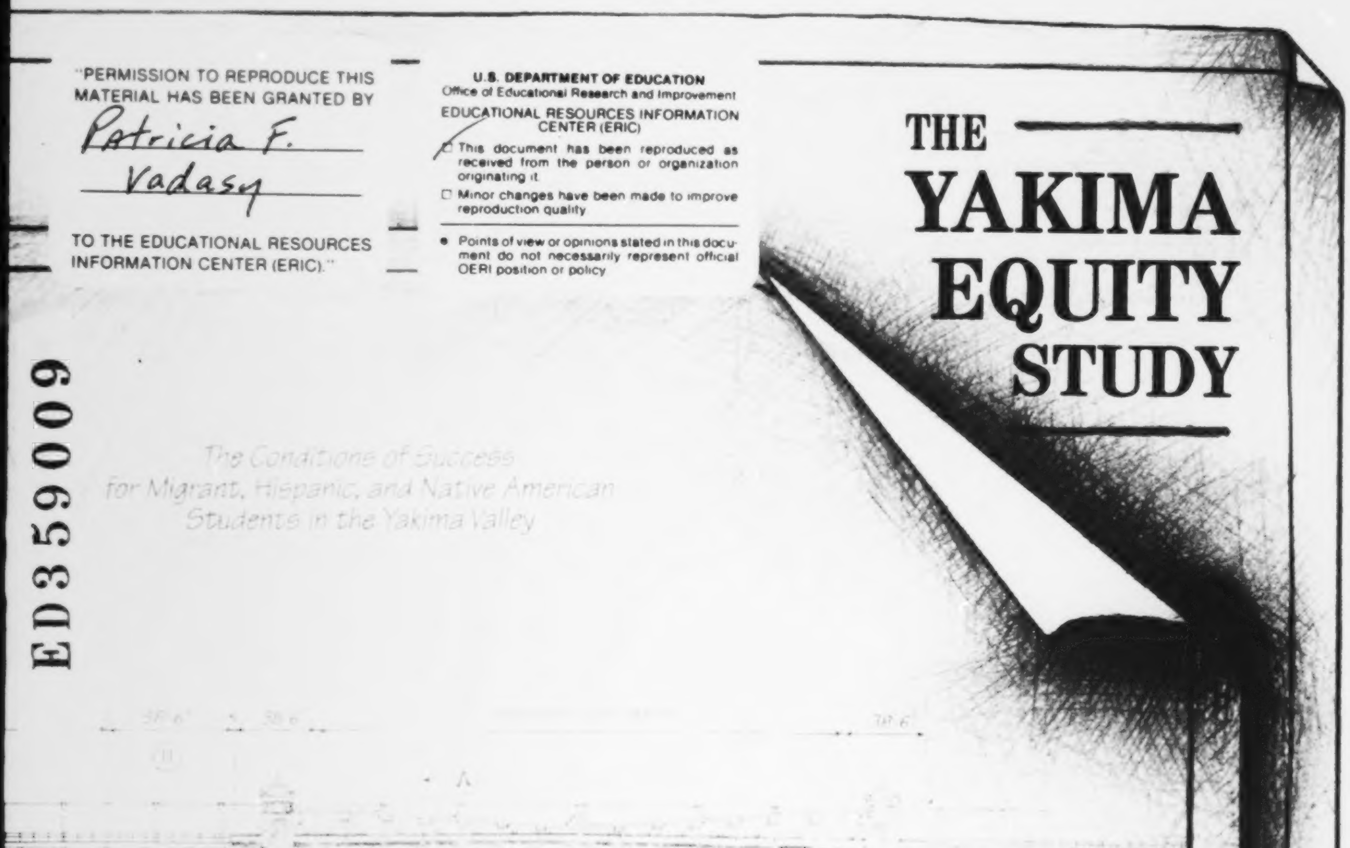

THE YAKIMA EQUITY STUDY

The Conditions of Success for Migrant, Hispanic, and Native American Students in the Yakima Valley

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The Yakima Equity Study

The Conditions of Success for Migrant, Hispanic, and Native American Students in the Yakima Valley

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INTRODUCTION

Giving all children an equal chance to do well in school may be the greatest challenge that today's educators and educational systems face. The diversity of today's students challenges the traditional school. These are students whose needs are not met by the "regular" educational approaches that worked in the past: children with disabilities, very young children, children who speak different languages, children of poverty, children from non-Anglo cultures, children who need something very different from what schools have traditionally offered. The single school door that formerly opened for all children is being replaced with many school doors, paths, and options that are designed to give special attention to particular groups of students. This great student diversity, which is manifest in the five school districts in this study, gives rise to the main issues that surfaced in our 88 interviews across the districts: the varying levels of understanding and sensitivity to the needs of non-Anglo students; the many social and economic problems that impinge on students' school performance; the partial implementation of solutions; and the lack of agreement on what the answers are.

One Size Does Not Fit All

Like all of our nation's schools, the schools we observed in the Yakima Valley are in transition from generic, "one-size-fits-all" education to "made-to-order" programs. They are moving from offering a predetermined package of services for all students to responding to the special needs of their student "market."

The result is constant and even radical change for the largest and perhaps most stable of all American institutions. Historically, schools have asked the student to change in order to "fit in." Now, a quiet revolution is taking place—the student is asking the school to change.

Culture: The Foundation of Learning

A child's cultural background is the foundation for her understanding, and the framework for new learning. The recognition of this fact is one of the driving forces for school change in the '90s. In our research for this report, we looked at how and whether schools that formerly served predominantly Anglo student populations have adapted and changed in response to the presence of large and increasing numbers of Hispanic and Native American children. We found abundant *adaptation,* yet little fundamental change.

The way people frame the issue of cultural diversity affects how they will address it. We found that our informants viewed non-Anglo children as "minorities" and their educational needs as "problems." (As a result, the reader will find this report also frames many important issues as "problems" and refers to children as "minorities.")

We saw schools accommodating different cultures, languages and lifestyles by adjusting and modifying the existing system. However, educational structures and practices do not yet address or reflect how children's culture determines their school experience. After a year of study we have concluded that the problems and needs that our Yakima Valley stakeholders shared with us *require* this fundamental change.

Making fundamental changes requires that the challenge of the culture and language of students be clearly and emphatically in mind when *all* school policies and practices are formulated. Many small modifications to a system built on a "mono-cultural" foundation do not produce fundamental change we see as required.

Consequences of No Fundamental Change

We believe that many of the issues and problems the schools face result from implementing many small modifications rather than fundamental change. Throughout this report, we have tried to present examples of the following consequences:

Outcome vs. Process. We saw many instances of processes that did not produce desired outcomes. For example, all districts have several Parent Advisory Councils, but little parent involvement. Merely having the process in place may fulfill a federal requirement, but little is gained if the process does not result in the desired outcome.

Doing the Right Thing. Sometimes, having good ideas, knowing the right thing to do is not enough; good ideas fail because people don't embrace the whole vision. Incomplete or poor implementation can make the situation worse, not better. We were reminded that planning for educational equity for all children is not like ordering a Chinese meal—you can't pick and choose willy-nilly and end up with a good product.

While the components of the solution may not be the same in all schools, only a complete plan, rather than discrete pieces, will assure student success.

Our story describes the attempts these districts are making to do the right thing. This is important to underscore—we found that districts really want to do the right thing. We found that there is much disagreement about what that right thing is. This makes it difficult for districts to think about and resolve some of the issues that are raised in this report. We also found that some people are not thinking about the problems at all. Some people are not thinking about them in the right way. For example, a district administrator may see only that parents never have any issues to put on the agendas for meetings, but may not see that parents need help articulating their concerns and feeling confident enough to share them. Because there is a lack of consensus on the problems, it is not surprising that there is a lack of consensus on good solutions. At the same time, there is not a single set of ideal solutions. Each district has to respond to the unique characteristics of its students and community.

If You Don't "Own" the Children, You Don't "Own" Their Problems. A question that underlies this story is "Whose kids are these?"—who has responsibility for the school success of migrant, Hispanic and Native American students. The way that programs, children, and staff are segmented has resulted in a patchwork of ownership in which culture plays a large part. If schools don't embrace these students as their concern, schools have no motivation to participate in the solutions, and they can and do walk away.

This story describes the degree of concern that informants shared with us about the kinds of difficulties—academic, economic and social—these students face.

How To Use This Report

This is a difficult report. It was difficult to write, and it includes findings that will be difficult for districts to understand and deal with. It is not a report with a tidy list of recommendations for readers to consider. It is really a story that readers will need to be ready to listen to thoughtfully in order to understand what we found. We hope that the contents of this report will sensitize people to the challenges faced by children and by schools. We hope the findings will offer school staff an opportunity to reflect on themselves and their practices.

The Bridge to Educational Equity

This report is about equity in education for migrant, Native American, and Hispanic students. By equity, we do not mean simply the equal distribution of available educational resources and supports. Our definition of equity is the adequacy of resources essential for a student to compete and participate fully in school, and later in society. Schools that give priority to equity for their students thoughtfully plan to provide the resources to enable all students to achieve to high standards. These schools acknowledge that equity requires that they level the playing field for students who lack certain prerequisite skills, like English proficiency, to benefit from education. Schools that value equity also make it possible for students from minority backgrounds to access and achieve educational goals, like college enrollment, that are often assumed to be available only to Anglo middle-class students.

We have used the metaphor of a bridge to organize our study findings. The bridge is the structure that makes it possible for migrant, Native American, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to experience positive educational outcomes, culminating in a high school diploma. The bridge to these outcomes consists of **pillars** that support the schools' day-to-day efforts, and a **bridge span** of program, staff and parent characteristics that more directly help students achieve positive educational outcomes. The pillars are conditions that the schools can influence through their policies and collaboration with parents and the community. The bridge span consists of conditions that schools can directly control and that, when present, result in good educational outcomes.

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FRAMEWORK FOR YAKIMA REPORT

The Pillars

These are conditions that the district can influence through its policies and through collaboration with parents and the community.

1. Parents Who Support Education
   Parents value and support education.

2. Parents Who Are Organized
   Schools extend themselves to enable parents to work with the schools on an equal footing.

3. Community That Values Pluralism
   The school is part of a pluralistic community that values diversity and builds a vision of its future that includes all residents.

4. Community-School Partnerships
   The school's mission and activities blend with community needs, resources, and values.

The Bridge Span

These are conditions that the school can control. When these are present, students are most likely to experience good outcomes.

Program Characteristics

5. Schools That Foster Parent Involvement
   Schools make parent involvement happen through thoughtful planning, providing a welcome environment, dedicating school resources and energies to the purpose, and developing parent skills and knowledge.

6. A Positive Multicultural Environment
   The school atmosphere, staff, curriculum and activities promote student achievement and respect for students from minority cultures.

7. Programs That Accommodate Diversity
   Schools create flexible programs and policies to accommodate student diversity.

8. Programs for Native American Students
   Programs for Native American students incorporate cultural foundations and address the problems of low academic performance and alienation from school.

9. Programs for Bilingual Students
   Bilingual students have access to a variety of resources to reduce their disadvantage, including trained and sufficient paraprofessionals and bilingual teachers, appropriate materials, and regular assessments of fluency and needs.

10. Programs for Migrant Students
    Migrant students have access to specialized programs and services.

11. Early Childhood Programs
    Preschool and early intervention resources are available for all families.

12. Supports for Struggling Students
    The school offers supports for struggling students.

13. Special Education Programs
Special education programs safeguard that children are selected on the basis of need rather than ethnicity, and provide appropriate services that respond to important cultural and linguistic differences.

14. Equal Access To Programs
Educational opportunities and programs are available to all students on an equal basis.

15. Alternative High Schools
Alternative high school programs are available to provide respite and specialized programs, with safeguards for transition back to regular programs.

16. Dropout Prevention
Schools provide long-term and comprehensive dropout prevention interventions.

17. Targeted Prevention
The school offers counselling, and sex, drug, and parenting education.

18. Supplemental Funds
Supplemental funding for special populations is used to enhance high-quality basic educational programs.

19. Local Leadership
Key individuals provide leadership and take risks.

20. Strategic Planning For Equity
Strategic planning at all levels of school administration gives priority to equity for all students and assures that all staff are working together to achieve common goals.

21. Coordination With Health Agencies
Schools coordinate with health agencies to meet students' health needs.

Staff Characteristics

22. Teacher Attitudes and Expectations
Teachers have positive attitudes towards and high expectations for all students.

23. Staff Ethnic Representation
Teaching and administrative staff reflect the changing ethnic makeup of the community and school.

24. Staff Skills and Commitment
Teachers and administrators have or acquire the skills and commitment to teach bilingual, migrant, and Native American students.

Final Thoughts

Our year of study in the Yakima Valley taught us many lessons. The people we interviewed—our informants—were very gentle in their careful lessons for two outsiders from "the coast." We have tried to give a voice to these important lessons throughout the report.

Diversity Means Everybody is Different. Perhaps the most important lesson we learned is that generalizations about groups of people are nearly always inaccurate, misleading and unfair to most of the members of the group. We have tried not to generalize, but the reader will find many instances where we talk about Hispanics, or Native Americans, migrants, teachers, administrators, and parents as if they are all alike. They are not.

Viewing Cultural Diversity as a Problem is a Problem. If cultural diversity is viewed as a problem, the system will respond in a "problem solving" mode and ignore the benefits of diversity. Our informants cautioned us to recognize the cultural richness of multicultural representation in schools and celebrate the strength that has allowed non-Anglo groups to survive in a hostile environment.

Bad Things Happen in Good Schools. Even in the most ideal school picture, some students will experience undesirable outcomes. Many important things that affect how a child does in school are not entirely controlled or controllable by the school. We understand the extreme poverty and other destabilizing forces that families experience, which has a profound effect on students and which school staff cannot ignore if they are to do their jobs for these students.

Wouldn't It Be Pretty If It Were So. It would be wonderful if our values and ideals could be immediately translated into sure-fire and guaranteed solutions and results. Reality is not that tidy. However, these solutions may not produce the intended outcome. In making fundamental school reforms that recognize cultural differences, there are costs. We select solutions that reflect our values and ideals. One of the greatest costs may be to our ideals and values.

For example, models of service which are based entirely on integration and assimilation may not be the best models. Perhaps Spanish-speaking children should be taught in Spanish with their Spanish-speaking peers by Spanish-speaking teachers. Perhaps education for Indian children would be most effective if the traditions and values of Native American people were infused into the school program.

Limitations

Unfortunately we have very little information to help us answer questions about the best methods and models for instruction. Program evaluation is hindered by many factors: the incremental, haphazard nature of change; inadequate resources to conduct useful evaluations; and a general lack of agreement about the problems and outcomes of multicultural education.

We are not offering a cookbook of solutions. The findings do not spell out *all* the specific things each school can and should do. The best we can offer from our data are directions and techniques. We can raise questions that will cause schools to consider what more or what different things they can be doing.

Study Methods

This report is based on a one-year qualitative study (October 1, 1991-September 30, 1992) in which data were collected through interviews with 88 key informants in the five school districts: Yakima, Toppenish, Grandview, Mt. Adams, and Wapato.

In September 1991, we formed a local advisory board of seven members with experience in educational programs for migrant, Hispanic, and Native American students. We worked with the advisory board to formulate an interview protocol of questions that reflected their and our major concerns—appropriate placement and services for the target student groups. The board selected the district sample for data collection based on the proportion of target students served in the districts and the local issues of concern to the study. Board members nominated a list of initial key informants—individuals in the five districts who could provide an informed and experienced perspective on serving the target students. By "triangulating" these perspectives, seeing how they fit together, we were able to create the story line of this report.

Data collection began in November 1991. The two project co-directors made trips from Seattle to Yakima to conduct interviews with nominated informants. The first group of interviews in November was completed with the help of an assistant, Dr. Phyllis Doyle. These November interviews served as a fieldtest of the interview protocol, and were recorded through notes taken by the interviewers.

In December 1991 and January 1992, we reviewed our initial data and found that the issues that informants raised and responded to were considerably broader than those outlined in our protocol. We therefore revised our interview outline and we made the decision to tape-record all remaining interviews in order to capture the richness of detail that informants shared with us.

Over the course of the study, we met regularly with Dr. Thomas Lonner, a sociologist with expertise in qualitative research, particularly with regard to community services for minority children. Dr. Lonner served as our "research coach." He provided assistance with qualitative analysis methods, data organization, and preparation of the final report.

Subsequent data-collection trips occurred between February and June 1992. We selected individuals for these remaining interviews based on several criteria:

- Recommendations from previous informants who were experienced and/or well informed and thoughtful about the issues concerning the target groups
- A reasonably representative distribution of interviews across districts, informant roles, and ethnic groups
- Willingness and availability of informants to meet with us and talk

Interviews averaged 1 to 1½ hours in length.

When we got back to Seattle with our interview tapes, we had the recordings transcribed into a text format. In cases where we interviewed Spanish-speaking informants, we had the interviews translated. Then we proceeded to code each interview.

Coding and analysis consisted of going through the transcript text, line by line, and summarizing and reflecting on what the individuals said. The notes we made on each interview were later literally snipped apart and sorted into categories, such as parent involvement, alternative school programs, and local conditions. We wrote over 1,100 notes on the interviews we coded. These notes later formed the basis for this final report. A more detailed description of qualitative analysis techniques used can be found in Glaser (1978) and Strauss (1987).

Our recommendations are directly based on insights and discoveries by informants in our study, and on our reflections on information they shared. In this report, we are the voice for the inventions and desires of 88 very thoughtful informants from the Yakima Valley districts.

Schools and Families in the Yakima Valley: Profiles of Three Children

This report is primarily about organizations, systems, and agencies, and how they serve children and families. Yet, embedded in this report are the stories of many Yakima Valley children and youth we heard in our interviews. In the following section, we present composite profiles of three students whose educational experiences are more the rule than the exception. These descriptions are drawn from our interviews and portray many of the challenges faced by many of the children in the region. These profiles are not stereotypes, however, and cannot capture the full spectrum of these children's experiences. We offer these profiles here in the introduction so that readers will not lose track of the children who are the focus of the policies and programs we describe.

Delia

Delia Martinez is seven years old. She is the fifth of seven children in the Martinez family. Delia, her mother, and her three youngest siblings arrived in the Yakima Valley six months ago to join Mr. Martinez and her three teenaged brothers.

Mr. Martinez has worked as a migrant agricultural laborer in the Yakima Valley for 10 years. With the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Mr. Martinez was able to obtain citizenship and bring his family to America from Mexico. In Mexico the Martinez family lived in a rural village in Sonora. Like most families in their village, they struggled to keep food on the table. By working in the United States, Mr. Martinez hoped to improve the quality of life for his family. Now, the entire family has moved to America with the hope of a better life.

Delia attended school in Mexico for only three months because the public school in her village required tuition which her family was unable to pay. Delia's parents are pleased that she will be able to attend school in the Yakima Valley and learn English. They know that learning English will be a very important part of their family's success.

Delia's mother and father registered her in the elementary school in their neighborhood. An English-speaking family friend accompanied them to the school to assist with registration. Delia was informally tested to determine if she needed bilingual services. The results of her test showed that she knew almost no English and that she was "delayed" by Mexican standards in Spanish language. She was placed in Mrs. Emory's second-grade classroom.

In Mrs. Emory's classroom, there were seven other children who spoke mostly Spanish. They were grouped together for reading, language arts, and English instruction. They were taught by Mrs. Ramirez, an instructional aide who was in the classroom for half of the day. Mrs. Ramirez had been an instructional aide for one year. The school structure did not allow any time for her to plan with the classroom teacher, but she had some English materials that she used with her students.

When Mrs. Ramirez was in the classroom, Delia and her group were taught English vocabulary and language. They also worked on reading (in English) and writing. When Mrs. Ramirez was not in the classroom, Delia and her group worked with the other children but understood very little. Sometimes, the teacher would ask other second graders who spoke Spanish to interpret, so that Delia could understand. Frequently, she did not understand the child interpreter or the teacher.

By the end of the school year, Delia had learned to speak English quite well. Classroom instruction, English-speaking playmates at recess, and her own aptitude helped her along the way. There were many costs to Delia, however. She no longer felt comfortable speaking Spanish because Mrs. Emory did not like children to use Spanish in the classroom or on the playground. Delia was ashamed of her parents when they came to school because they spoke Spanish. She came to know that there was something wrong with her family and with herself.

In third grade, Delia no longer received any instruction in Spanish. At the beginning of the year she did well in conversation, but there were still some things she did not understand in class. At the end of third grade, she understood English very well but was far behind the expected third-grade level in reading, language arts, and arithmetic. Delia no longer spoke Spanish at home and had difficulty communicating with her family. Because she was so far behind in basic skills, Delia would receive Chapter 1 remedial services in fourth grade.

The economic problems of the Martinez family did not go away when they moved to the Yakima Valley. In order to pay for housing, food, and clothing for their family, both Mr. and Mrs. Martinez had to work long hours in the fields. Mrs. Emory was aware of their problems and found extra clothes to send home for the family.

Mrs. Emory and the school nurse were concerned about Delia's chronic ear infections and sent a note home to the parents suggesting that they look into the problem. When her note went unanswered, she called Child Protective Services to intervene with the family. Mr. and Mrs. Martinez were confused and angered by the Child Protective Services representative. They called the school immediately. After some time, the school secretary was able to find an instructional aide who could speak to Mr. Martinez on the phone. Mr. and Mrs. Martinez were embarrassed and angered by the incident.

Some of Delia's academic problems may have been due to her absences. Every December her entire family returned to Mexico in order to visit Delia's grandparents. Delia missed over 30 days of school during this time. She attended summer school, but only sporadically because she was needed at home to babysit for her younger siblings when her mother had to work in the fields. Delia's teacher asked the migrant home visitor to talk to Mr. and Mrs. Martinez about the effects of their vacation on Delia's progress. Mr. and Mrs. Martinez had little trust in the school by this time and decided that visiting their family was more important than keeping Delia in school.

Rafael

Rafael Sanchez is a lot like Delia. He comes from a large family and is newly arrived in the Yakima Valley. Rafael is five years old and arrived in time to enter the Migrant Head Start program four months before kindergarten started.

Rafael's test results showed that his language skills in Spanish were low. His parents had little formal schooling. The language that Rafael heard at home was a rural Mexican Spanish that included dialect and many Indian words. The Head Start staff decided to work with Rafael to improve his Spanish language so that he would enter school with a firm language base. Rafael's mother was invited to the school to work with him. She and her husband were also offered the opportunity to take an evening English class at the local junior high school.

By the time Rafael was ready to enter kindergarten, his language skills had improved, but he was still behind. He was placed in Mrs. Cerrillo's classroom. Mrs. Cerrillo had met Rafael and his parents in June before school started. She and the school staff had visited Rafael's program. They spoke with the parents and the children to prepare them for the new school. Rafael also had an opportunity to visit the new school.

In his new kindergarten class, Rafael received most of his instruction in Spanish. He learned all the things children learn in kindergarten—the alphabet, how to write his name, vocabulary, number concepts—only he learned them in Spanish. Mrs. Cerrillo also used English sometimes. The children were not discouraged from speaking Spanish. Both their teachers and their friends spoke both languages. As the year went on, Mrs. Cerrillo and the children used English more and more. However, the primary language of instruction was still Spanish.

In October, Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez told Mrs. Cerrillo about a planned trip to Mexico. She was very concerned about Rafael's school progress. He had already missed quite a few days of school and had begun to appear listless and tired at school. Mrs. Cerrillo requested the help of a social worker from a community agency.

The social worker made arrangements to visit Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez and discovered that the family was experiencing severe problems with two older sons who had become involved in gang activity. The parents felt that if they took the family back to Mexico for a while, the older sons would "shape up" and lose their gang connections.

Continued economic difficulties, the daily struggle for survival, and the problems with the two older sons all added up to a very stressful home life for Rafael and his younger siblings. Over the course of a few weeks, the social worker was able to find help for the older brothers and some economic assistance for the family. She gained the trust of the family and was able to discuss the effects of their planned trip to Mexico on the children's school progress. Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez agreed to reconsider their trip.

Rafael made a lot of progress in kindergarten. He learned to read some words in Spanish and even in English. When it came time for the parent-teacher conference, Mrs. Cerrillo had Rafael read to his parents in English and in Spanish. She also brought along an *Ojo de Dios* ("Eye of God") that Rafael had made at school. Mrs. Cerrillo went to Rafael's home for the conference. Mr. and Mrs. Sanchez were cutting asparagus and had difficulty arranging a time to come to school.

Rafael became more and more proficient in English and in academic subjects. In first grade, he continued in a bilingual program where his teacher presented concepts in Spanish and in English. By the time Rafael entered fourth grade, he was able to have all of his instruction provided in English. Although he was not at the top of his class, he was certainly a solid fourth-grader. He was also able to read and write in two languages.

Tom Davis

Tom Davis is 16 years old and a junior in high school. He is a member of the Blackfoot tribe and grew up in Montana. He came to the Yakima Valley with his parents and two younger brothers when he was 12 in order for his mother to take a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) job transfer on the Yakima reservation. He has attended school in several of the local districts. He now attends a large high school of 700 students where he is one of three Native American students in his class. The other two are members of the Yakima and Crow Nations. Tom is not particularly close friends with either of them. They don't seem to have much in common.

After Tom's family moved to Washington, his father's drinking problem worsened, and Tom's mother and father separated. Tom lived with his mother for a while, but then his mother decided to move back to Montana with Tom's brothers. Tom wanted to stay in Washington, so last year Tom moved in with his aunt Betty. Tom's aunt lived alone since her husband died in a logging accident. Her kids were grown and married. She agreed that Tom could live with her until he finished school. Tom's aunt was very traditional, and she tried to persuade Tom to participate in local ceremonies and traditions. Sometimes Tom went with her to the Shaker Church and to other tribal activities.

Tom liked school and he didn't like school. In some of his classes, such as math, he felt happy when he did well. In other classes, like social studies, he felt bad because he had trouble with the reading materials, and he couldn't find ways to say what he knew—like the other kids in class could do. Sometimes he secretly thought about going to the community college when he finished high school. But he had no one to talk to about it. No one in his family ever went to college. And he didn't know how he could find the money to pay for it. He knew some kids got scholarships, but his grades were not great, and he didn't play any sports that well. And his family couldn't help. When he thought about it longer, he thought that he would feel even more lonely and uncomfortable with the kinds of kids who go to college. A lot of the time Tom felt like he just wanted to be alone, yet he didn't really.

Earlier this year, Tom began to work nights in order to help out with his expenses at his aunt's, and to start to save money to buy a car. He worked evenings delivering pizzas, and then would try to study before going to bed. He began to have trouble getting up in the morning, and because his aunt would leave for work before Tom had to leave for school, there were mornings when he missed first and second period.

The Indian Education liaison, Mary, became aware that Tom was missing classes, and whenever she could she would stop by Tom's house at 7:30 and bang on the door to wake him up. She also tried to schedule some one-on-one tutoring for Tom to help him catch up on his homework and classes.

In January, Tom's grandmother died in Montana, and Tom and his aunt went to attend the funeral. Tom was gone for two weeks, and when he got back, he was suspended for having more than nine absences and was sent to the district's alternative program to make up half the credit.

Mary, the Indian Education liaison, was not informed about Tom's absences or missing credits. If she had been, she would have monitored Tom's attendance more carefully. She might have been able to plan a prearranged absence with Tom's teachers to allow him to keep up with his classes while he was gone.

Tom didn't really want to go to the alternative school. Although he often felt lonely and that he didn't belong in his high school, he wanted to stay and get his diploma with his classmates.

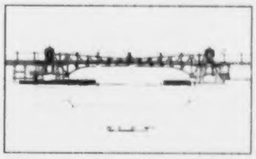
Mary tried to get Tom's aunt Betty to come to parent meetings and to work with her to keep Tom coming to school and doing his homework. Betty did not really understand the importance of these activities, and she had strong memories of her mother's stories about being forced to go to the Indian boarding school. Betty had sent her children to the tribal school, and was unfamiliar with public school procedures. She was also suspicious of Mary, because she worked for the schools, and because Mary was what Betty thought of as an "urban Indian" who appeared to have forsaken her traditions and adopted the white standard of behavior and success. Betty had never seen Mary at any of the tribal gatherings at the longhouse or at the Shaker church.

Tom had to take the bus clear across town to go to the alternative school. He was placed in a class that was taught by a Native American teacher, Frank, and that had five other Native American students in it. The teacher knew a lot about the students' culture and traditions, and the class worked on several outdoor projects.

Tom had never been in a class with so many other Native American students in it before. They did some outdoor activities like carving and going on a fishing trip that Tom really enjoyed.

The students in Tom's class differed a lot in their basic skills. Some of the students had great difficulty reading the textbooks. Tom was a pretty shaky reader, and Frank had to spend time in every class helping all of the students on their basic skills. Frank could see that Tom's reading skills were improving when he worked with him. Frank decided to see if he could find some additional tutoring assistance for Tom, because he couldn't give Tom the time that he really needed and seemed to benefit from.

PARENTS WHO SUPPORT EDUCATION



Parents value and support education.

THE PROBLEM

Schools cannot succeed without parent support. Schools and parents have to work together as a team to prepare students for their futures. The value that parents place on education is one of the foundations of a child's educational experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Parents act out their values about education.

Informants felt that parents play a major role in making education a priority in the family. In families where education is valued:

- Parents feel a strong sense of responsibility for their child's education.
- Parents make sure their children get to school and have good attendance.
- Parents believe education will help their children, and want their children to graduate.
- Parents get involved in school activities as a means of improving the education their child receives.
- Parents let their child know they will be involved in his/her education.
- Parents verge on being intrusive by demanding information from school staff about their child.

Schools understand that the experiences of migrant and Native American parents influence how they act out their values regarding education.

Many informants described how strongly motivated migrant families and students are to acquire an education. In newly arrived migrant families, the parents may be very eager for someone in the family to become proficient in English. In other migrant families, however, survival requires all members to work, and education may be necessarily less important.

> ***"A lot of the migrant kids have to support, have to pitch in for the family. Survival is first."***
> ***Former migrant student***

Parents who come from rural areas of Mexico may be accustomed to paying money for their children's schooling. After their children attain a certain skill level, they aren't expected to go any further.

Because learning English is a prerequisite to success in this country for all students, informants described successful students as those whose parents understand the importance of social and sports activities for their children. Such parents realize that through making friends and socializing in activities, their children will have to practice and improve their English skills. These parents show that they value education by encouraging their children to participate in after-school activities, although it may mean a loss of income to the family.

At the same time, parents value strong academic programs and worry that teacher expectations are not high enough, due to the large numbers of students at risk in the community. They worry about cuts to academic programs in their district:

> *"I'd like to see the teachers be more positive. That's a big plus."*
> *Native American parent*

In some Native American communities, informants explained that historically it has not been the parents' role to get involved in their child's education—formerly, that was the extended family's role. This has been very adaptive in the past, because it assured that someone was always there if the parent died or the family became separated. However, this becomes problematic for the schools when Native American students leave home and no one is clearly responsible for them. When the school tries to assume responsibility, the parents may protest.

Native American students are also being affected by the social changes occurring in the valley:

> *"In the past, there was always an extended family member who was free of drugs to take care of children. But now we have a generation of grandmas and aunts and uncles out partying and drinking just as much as parents. So we're really running out of caregiver role models. This is a recent change."*
> *Elementary assistant principal*

In some Native American families, parents and elders have had very different educational experiences—often very negative ones in boarding schools or in white schools—from today's public schools. Consequently, they don't have first-hand experience with the public school system, and they have bad memories of their schooling. They may communicate their attitudes either verbally or nonverbally to students. They may equate a white education with forsaking their native culture, and losing cultural and traditional ties:

> *"So you have these kids living with relatives who have very bad memories about school. Because without even verbalizing the attitude is totally different—'Why should I force my kid to go to school? He doesn't want to. Can't make him.'"*
> *Indian Education staff*

Because Native American parents are members of their own nations, they may not aspire to rise up the ladder of the larger society. Their political perspective may affect the importance they attach to public schooling and subsequent achievement.

School staff help to improve parent attitudes towards the schools by becoming more informed about Native American culture and traditions. Sensitive staff recognize that what may appear to be a simple disregard for education is really a legitimate distrust of a system that has stigmatized Native Americans, has regarded them as outsiders for many years, and has often not listened to their concerns:

> *"If you don't feel welcome, you're just going to turn away. So it's the feeling that Indian people get, they know it very well. I've been told stories about my grandparents, about what happened to them, and so I know, I'm very close to it. It has to do with the feeling of the individual, how they feel toward that individual. Because Indian people are very keen observers of behavior. So when we're talking about kids that have parents that have not had successful experiences of being in the public school system, or boarding school, or mission. We've learned to be observers and just listen. We don't come from the framework of the public schools."*
> *Native American parent*

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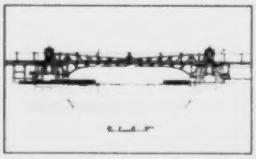
PARENTS WHO ARE ORGANIZED



Schools extend themselves to enable parents to work with schools on an equal footing.

THE PROBLEM

The vehicles for parent involvement in most districts have been designed with middle-class parent models in mind—parents who come with the skills and understanding of the school organization that enable them to fill traditional parent roles as PTA or Parent Advisory Council (PAC) member, or advocate for their child's program. Non-middle-class parents often come to the school at a disadvantage in these forums due to language, class, and cultural differences, as well as time constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools create strategies for making migrant and Native American parents part of the system.

School staff desire to work with parents who possess certain attributes:

- They are results-oriented.
- They have experience working on committees.
- They are assertive and aware of issues.
- They can understand their child's needs or disability.
- They are not superstitious.
- They are willing to understand the implications of problems.

If parents are not like this, the schools "will eventually give up on them," as one medical provider said, because they are too difficult and frustrating for the school to help.

Migrant and Native American parents value education for their children, but are often aware that they lack the skills they need to sit as equals at the table and negotiate with the schools. These parents often don't feel part of the system:

> ***"The newly arrived parents need to be brought in somehow. It seems like if it's done in a more one-to-one situation, where you spent a little bit more in order to get a parent involved, I think maybe even economically it would make sense."***
>
> ***PAC member***

For example, many newly arrived parents speak only Spanish and do not read. They lack education and skills. They don't know how to access the school system. When they lived in Mexico or other countries of origin, these parents *did* get involved in their child's education. After arriving in the U.S., they became less involved because they lack negotiating skills (e.g., language), don't know the system, and are intimidated by the schools.

Several informants, parents and school staff alike, suggested strategies for actively *engaging* parents to make them an influential, even determinative part of the system:

- Organizing parent groups that are given actual responsibility for things that are going on in the schools, such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

- Asking parents what they would like the school to do for their children and letting parents know the limits on what the school can do.
- Teaching parents leadership skills.
- Making ESL instruction available for parents, to acknowledge that speaking and reading English is a key part of parent involvement.
- Giving parents responsibility for making decisions about their children's programs.

In our interviews in several districts, we heard of school boards with ethnic representation that did not reflect the district demographics:

> ***"And again, you know, the way that the school runs its business, they were not really wanting any Hispanics on the board."***
>
> ***Migrant parent***

> ***"There should be an Indian on the school board."***
>
> ***Native American parent***

Schools boards are one source of power to which non-Anglo parents continue to have limited access.

The PACs are one place where parents' power or lack of it in working with the district is evident. In some districts, the district staff set the meeting agendas, run the meetings, and invite parents to come and sign in for the record:

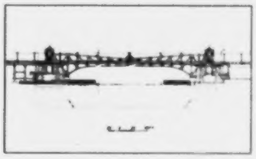
> ***"We went to the last local meeting, and we talked about what we talked about in Olympia, but it wasn't as if we had a lot of questions directed towards us. It was just like, 'This is what we're doing,' and that was it."***
>
> ***PAC president***

In other districts, parent concerns are included as the central part of the meeting agendas, and district staff provide leadership support only when none exists among the parents. Meanwhile, these districts provide training to parents to develop their leadership skills.

A good example of parents working successfully along side school staff is an Indian Education Committee where parents not only participate in policy and budget decisions, but also have a working partnership with district officials in devising programs and services. Parents also help to settle disputes between other parents and the schools, and to troubleshoot particular problems. This district uses the Indian Education Committee as an advocacy organization as well as a policy-making board.

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNITY THAT VALUES PLURALISM



The school is part of a pluralistic community that values diversity and builds a vision for the future that includes all residents.

THE PROBLEM

In the Yakima Valley and throughout the United States, schools serve as the major "bridge" to the Anglo culture for minority groups. By providing a strong education, schools seek to help Native American and Mexican students develop a "compromise with the white ethic that dominates the U.S." (District administrator)

At the same time, schools are charged with preserving the "American Way." As tools of both the community power structure and of minority groups, the schools search for the balance between maintaining the dominant Anglo culture and preserving the cultures of their increasing non-Anglo student populations.

Schools walk a difficult path between accommodating prevailing community attitudes and providing equitable, relevant educational programs. They often appear to stumble in the dark, searching for boundaries that do not appear until they are violated. Too little adaptation to the needs of students from cultural minorities hampers the education of the students. However, too much adaptation compromises community values, and threatens the dominant culture.

Acculturation versus Assimilation

School districts and communities struggle to establish acceptable boundaries for accommodating their non-Anglo residents. In some districts, we were told that students must find a way to "fit in." Change is one-sided—the student changes, the school and community do not. In becoming like all other students, Spanish-speaking students learn English, become assimilated into the community, and shed their own culture and blend into Anglo culture.

Advocates of cultural pluralism rather than assimilation felt strongly that non-Anglo students need to maintain a connection with their culture. They want schools to change in order to accommodate Mexican and Native American children:

> ***"We're here to stay, and they need to make some changes for us."***
> ***Project coordinator***

Each partner in the community-establishment/minority group dyad sees a need for change on the other side. Migrant Mexicans who use the matrilineal surname must adjust to using only one last name. Learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, changing your name all add up to tremendous accommodations. Families that face these major changes come to expect reciprocity in the community and in the schools.

Native Americans in the Yakima Valley have resisted wholesale assimilation for generations. They have become very possessive of their culture. Informants told us that they fear ridicule as well as the loss of their heritage if they open their culture to the community:

> ***"...because if they share their culture with the white dominant society, they hold it up to mockery. We make fun of their religion with team names like 'The Redskins.'"***
> ***District administrator***

Minority groups are complex and made up of individuals and groups in various modes of acculturation/assimilation.
The Yakima Indian Nation is comprised of 14 tribes and bands that were brought together through treaties. While some of these earlier tribal distinctions have decreased, there is obviously still diversity within the tribe in terms of economics, assimilation into the Anglo world, and other factors. Because it is a sovereign nation, the tribe has an organizational structure that is separate from the local community.

Informants characterized the tribal organization as being powerful and political. Both positive and negative outcomes of tribal politics were described to us. On the positive side, since the tribe is large and has a strong organizational structure, it is able to maintain a position of power when dealing with local, state and federal agencies. On the negative side, political infighting has resulted in lost opportunities, such as seeking particular grant funds.

There is not a sense of total or uniform community among Mexican families in the valley. Established Mexican families see themselves as very different from newly arrived families:

> *"I don't belong to this new generation coming here."*
> *Migrant Education staff*

> *"They have a different culture."*
> *Second-generation Mexican-American*

Newly arrived families have the same feelings toward more established residents of Mexican descent. Hispanic home visitors who are indigenous to the valley are regarded as representatives of the school and not one of "us." Newly arrived migrant parents are likely to interact with these home visitors the same way they interact with Anglo school representatives.

Some see the "we versus they" split growing as more newly arrived families settle in or travel through the area. Long-term residents may want to distance themselves from a group that is like them in some ways but very different in terms of economics, social status, and culture.

Informants perceived other differences between newly arrived and established Mexican families. Earlier immigrants came when the pie was bigger. It has shrunk significantly within the last few decades. Children of earlier migrants, the new first and second generation, face a different economic reality than their parents faced. New migrants may not yet have an understanding of these economic changes. Further, there is a tremendous contrast between their standard of living in Mexico and the standard of living they see in America. They are fired with enthusiasm by the promise of the American dream.

Some informants described striking differences between newly arrived and first- and second-generation Mexicans. Students who come directly from Mexico were described as:
- More willing to learn.
- More motivated to get somewhere in life.

Students from first- and second-generation families who have not "made it" were described as:
- Troublemakers.
- Feeling they have been left out of the pie.

The "we/they" split was also apparent in agencies and clinics that serve minority families. Agency staff prefer to work with those minority people who are already more like them. Minorities must become more like Anglos to receive help. This sets many minorities up for failure.

Some informants believed that the gap between poor immigrants and long-term residents can be closed by convincing the newcomers that a higher standard of living is available to them if they seek it. This reiterates the common theme that "they" can become more like "us" after "we" convince "them" that it is there for the seeking. This attitude suggests a Kafkaesque image of arriving that is always just beyond the reach of the have-nots, while it seems so effortless for the haves.

Informants also perceived differences between minority groups. For example, Indian parents were "hostile"; Mexican parents were "compliant." Sharing minority status and little power in the Anglo community may be the only thing minority groups have in common.

Rivalries develop when disenfranchised groups see themselves competing for a limited set of programs and benefits. For example, Indian parents expressed concern that there are so many programs for Mexican children. Indian parents felt that even though their children have problems in school, they do not receive adequate special services and supports to assure school success:

> ***"There are many more allowances and provisions made for other cultures in the public schools, especially in our area, where there is the Hispanic culture. I mean they've got—you name it—and those parents get in an uproar if they don't get services they want. And yet, there's no willingness to make an attempt to deal with the Native American population."***
>
> ***Native American administrator***

Minority families lack access to power.

The community power structure of small towns excludes minorities. School board members are parents of school principals. Principals sit on the city council. The intertwining of these organizations "locks out" minorities at every level of community involvement and development. The lack of representation in the power structure is perpetuated because a significant percentage of Mexican American and Native American adults are not registered to vote and therefore are not part of the community electorate.

Informants told us that levies fail and that local school construction efforts are frequently blocked by the local electorate. Perhaps the voters do not share in the vision of better schools or do not see how better schools and better graduates make a better culturally diverse community. Unfortunately, there is not a strong network to enlist the entire community's support in passing levies, e.g., the parishes, other churches, and all others who have a vested interest in the quality of the local graduates.

The impact of failed construction levies is a striking example of how the lack of community support affects the schools. Many schools in the region have felt the limits of building space, and informants cited examples of how space limitations adversely affect program implementation:

- In one district, the decision to eliminate pull-out programs for bilingual children was based on space limitations rather than on program philosophy or needs.
- In another district, we were told that there are special funds available to hire additional staff but there is no space to house the staff, their programs, or the students they would serve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Community power structure, schools and minority groups share a common vision for minority children and youth.

We found that it was not uncommon for schools and the community to butt heads over policies and programs for minority children. Superintendents answer to the community through elected school board members. If the school board does not support the goals of Hispanic or Native American parents, the superintendent may risk his or her job by promoting policies which are designed to increase the involvement of minority parents. Seeking levy support for new buildings to accommodate immigrant children in a community of unsympathetic voters poses a similar threat.

School districts may need to educate school board members and the community about the need to develop policies that respond to the unique needs of minority groups, the federal and state requirements to do so, and the educational relevance of valuing the cultures of students in the district:

> ***"And the best thing you can do is have educated minority people, and make them a part of the power structure, and carry the particular agenda that those minority people have in mind. And usually that agenda includes having a***

> *good community, a good school, a crime-free community and no drug trafficking. But until that population is brought in and made part of the fold, it will be harder to accomplish."*
> *Case manager*

Other community agencies confront the same push and pull between the values and lifestyles of minority clients and those of the larger community. Some agencies bridged cultural and economic differences by hiring bilingual staff and providing sliding fee scales. However, agency staff also told us that they have to make compromises—on language, culture, economics—implying that there is a preference to operate programs in English and for middle-class clients.

However, other gaps remain—between values, positions in society and status in the community. In a complex and diverse society, there are many different aspects of cultures, beyond ethnicity, that may need to be bridged—youth/adult, student/professional, youth/age and disease, poor/middle class.

Communities value diversity.

In an ideal setting, cultural diversity is valued at all levels of the school organization and the community. In a less-than-ideal setting, school boards do not value the diversity and needs of other cultures and resist programs that step outside traditional educational concerns and address economic and health problems. For example, in one district, staff opposed a school breakfast program because they felt that it diluted the school's real mission.

The various cultures in the Valley appear fairly isolated. Housing patterns are one example. In some communities participation in social activities appears to have little cultural crossover.

Much of the Yakima Valley is comprised of reservation land, and Native Americans are in truth the "host" culture. However, the Indian power base is among Indians, and they have very little power outside tribal concerns, despite control over significant land and water rights.

The picture that was painted for us by our informants was of the Indians as outsiders in the local community, rather than insiders. This view is not shared by the Native Americans. They view the Anglos and other non-Indians as the outsiders. This probably contributes to the frustrations they feel with a school system that treats Native American children as outsiders, requiring them to adapt to the programs and norms of outsiders.

Several informants felt that living near a reservation leads to greater understanding of Indian culture. Local residents are friends with Yakimas, and went to school with them. Still, informants expressed frustration at not having opportunities to learn about the Yakima Indian culture through the communities' institutions, e.g., the public schools, Yakima Valley Community College, Heritage College.

How do negative stereotypes held by the community affect the schools?

Racism, subtle and not-so-subtle, has the effect of making members of minority groups feel less valued. When these attitudes and expressions are present in the school, children get the message that they are not important. One informant told us that teachers tend to ask of new in-migrant students:

> *"'How long will you be here?' instead of saying, 'We are so glad you are here."*
> *Program director*

Many informants viewed the passage of time (measured in decades) as a great mitigator for changing attitudes. Several informants suggested that the longer the minority population is in the community, the greater the acceptance:

> *"These kids are not new to the area. The English-speaking population has adapted."*
> *District administrator*

The relative size of the minority population in the community is also seen as a mitigator. One informant told us that the "redneck" component of the community that views English as the official language is losing the battle. There are just too many Spanish-speaking people in the area now to make this a feasible position.

Yet despite significant numbers and a long history in the community, both Mexicans and Native Americans remain the subject of persistent negative stereotypes. Many minority informants gave examples of racial tension and tacit acceptance of racist behavior:

- Hispanics are perceived to be particularly suited for manual labor.
- Indians are seen as lazy, alcoholic, unable to operate on white man's time, and too dependent on government funding.
- Sporting events tolerate an Anglo team doing a "war dance" to embarrass their Indian opponents.

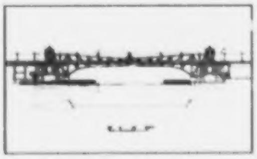
Cultural misunderstandings fuel negative attitudes. Unfortunately, cultural stereotypes rather than the real community history persist. One informant told us that some school board members believe that Indians do not pay taxes when, of course, they do. This type of misinformation creates significant resentments.

One isolated community seems to have avoided some of the ethnic/class/race clashes that other districts have experienced because:

- No one in the district is or looks to be very wealthy. In terms of class differences, the district is "flatter" than other districts that have a class of wealthy growers or an urban class.
- Native Americans prefer to remain fairly detached in this fairly traditional community. This political and spiritual distance diffuses the differences that divide other communities. On the other hand, Mexican-Americans who settle out in other communities aspire to take a place in society, creating tension and threatening the dominant population.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP



The school's mission and activities blend with community needs, resources and values.

THE PROBLEM

Districts cannot singlehandedly meet the often complex needs of migrant, Hispanic, and Native American students and their families. Education dollars and school staff alone cannot solve the social, health, and economic problems that these families often face, and which affect the child's ability to benefit from public education.

The boundaries between the school's and the community's responsibilities for social and health services have blurred over the past two decades. Schools recognize that many barriers must be removed before the traditional job of teaching the "three Rs" can begin:

> *"You can't close your eyes to a hungry child, or a child who's dirty or a child who needs clothes or who's wearing the same clothes two weeks in a row. You can't close your eyes to that because of the social dynamics in the classroom. But schools cannot do everything—no one agency can."*
>
> *School administrator*

Many problems that the schools face are not "owned" by the entire community. Community resources cannot be focussed on significant social problems when all or most parts of a community do not own the problems of *all* families. Shared ownership means that the activities of successful schools and communities must be intertwined, part of the same fabric, if they are to solve community problems.

When a community disagrees about the nature and definition of problems and how they are best solved, the results are fragmentation, inefficiency, and even inaction. Many problems do not get addressed because they cannot be commonly defined among elements of the community.

What is a community? A "community" can be defined in many ways—by geography, ethnicity, interests and values, and social institutions. In this chapter and the chapter that follows, "community" is defined as a collection of social institutions and sectors in a given locality. We recognize that a community is not a single system and is made up of many different communities-of-interest—people coming together at different times to plan or act.

Each community-of-interest differs in how it views social problems, and how best to solve them. Some segments see no need for change or deny the existence of problems. Others may recognize the problem but feel that the best solution is to leave it alone. Frequently, communities-of-interest differ in how they define problems, and they consequently arrive at very different solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools and community agencies work together.

Schools and community-based agencies have many overlapping missions. Frequently, they work with the same families and on the same problems. Informants pointed out issues that cloud the simple logic of a joint venture between schools and community agencies:

- Although school staff recognize that their students need supports that go beyond traditional classroom programs, where does the school's responsibility begin and end? One informant pointed out that schools should provide social work and counselling services only to the extent necessary to ensure that children are capable of *learning* rather than that children are emotionally stable. This is not an easy distinction to make.

- How do schools and agencies assure accountability in a multi-agency environment? Roles, responsibilities, and parameters for service will have to be carefully defined for all agencies. Schools will need new models for cross-disciplinary communication.

Informants told us that when schools and agencies do work together, they are much more effective in solving problems. For example, several of the school districts in this study promote parental literacy. Behind this practice is the recognition that parents who are literate are an important factor in a child's school success. These schools support literacy projects operated by community-based organizations by loaning space and computers.

In several districts, informants described a need in their community for counselling and training programs for migrant parents. These programs would inform migrant parents how to access community health and social services, indirectly benefitting their children's educations.

Informants told us that school districts are beginning to seek the expertise of outside "experts" from community-based organizations that serve minority families. Leadership and other personnel have been invited into the school system to provide guidance in program planning and delivery.

The involvement of community-based organizations in the schools also offers additional flexibility. Outside agencies are not restricted by rules that prevent schools and school staff from assuming expanded roles. For example, community-agency staff can be employed with professional degrees and may not need teaching certificates. They can use their own cars to take students home or travel outside the district to take students to the doctor.

We saw many examples of schools and communities working together:

- Case management services that link students and families to needed social and health services.
- Jointly operated adult ESL and GED classes.
- Public libraries that include a section of high quality children's books written in Spanish.
- A jointly operated HUD/school district drug-elimination project that includes after-school care at the housing project and assistance in getting children to school on time.
- Collaboration with health clinics in referral, service delivery and follow-up.
- Tribal support in the form of awards for students with good attendance and grade-point averages (GPAs).

Efforts at collaboration between schools and community-based organizations have met with resistance in the past. One successful collaboration had found several key ingredients that helped overcome school district resistance:

- Community-based programs need to have high visibility and credibility in the school district. Program staff may even be housed in school district office space and attend school staff meetings:

> ***"Our credo, our mantra every day, was that we look at maintaining high visibility and high credibility within the district, and if we don't have that within the first six months, then we're up a creek without a paddle."***
>
> ***Community organization staff***

- Community-based services need to be available to *all* students, not just migrant or Indian children. Special projects for special children can increase segregation and discourage parent cooperation. When the programs serve all children, then all parents are invested, not just the minority parents.
- Most community-based programs have to earn the trust of school districts by proving their services benefit students:

> ***"I had one administrator tell me, 'I don't know you, I don't trust you, and until you prove otherwise, this is the relationship.'"***
>
> ***Community organization staff***

When schools do "buy into" social service-type projects, they are recognizing that services not traditionally provided by the schools are an important piece of the education package.

Sometimes, however, bad history, bureaucratic monitoring procedures, or personality conflicts color current relations among local, regional, and state staff. In two districts, school staff have experienced what they felt to be unnecessarily burdensome accounting requirements and a lack of recognition for their programs from the state office that serves migrant students.

In some instances, we found that the needs of the school were beyond the abilities of the local community and its agencies to meet. We found that the poorer, more isolated, and more rural the community, the less likely the school was able to draw upon community resources, which are few and may not be as well organized or well funded as those in more urban communities. These more isolated communities must then seek assistance from state or national sources, which are more difficult to tap, requiring skilled grant-writing or development efforts and bringing the needs of the isolated community to the attention of distant sources of help.

The role of the schools is grounded in community realities and goals.

Harsh economic and social conditions require tough choices of many schools and community agencies. Ideally, the outcomes that schools seek for students are informed by choices made by parents and the community.

In one community with a large Native American population, many Native American students will remain in the area after graduation. In order to provide for this cultural preference, the high school must work very closely with the tribe, the BIA and others in the community to coordinate programs with actual job opportunities in the local area. The school cannot afford to operate as an isolated system. It has to ask:

> *"What the purpose of a school like ours is. Is it to teach kids to stay home and be able to survive and suffice on the incomes available, or is it to teach kids to leave?"*
>
> *District administrator*

The schools look beyond strictly educational concerns to be a resource to the wider community.

Many informants shared stories with us that demonstrated that the schools are not always a part of the fabric of the community. Opportunities to serve as a resource to the entire community are passed by or openly turned down. When schools miss these important invitations to participation, they sacrifice the opportunity to strengthen their relationships with minority families and communities-of-interest. By serving the interests of all segments of the community, the schools can become the glue that holds a community together, and enhance their ability to meet explicit goals (e.g., parent involvement). The schools can serve as a resource to the community in many small but important ways:

- Offering translation assistance by school/office staff for anyone with limited English proficiency.
- Providing playing fields and facilities for after-school programs for community youth and families.
- Providing summer-school, after-school, and latchkey programs for children.
- Providing administrative involvement, but not domination, in community-initiated groups, such as drug/gang prevention groups or a clean-up committee.

CHAPTER FIVE

SCHOOLS THAT FOSTER PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Schools make parent involvement happen through thoughtful planning, providing a welcome environment, dedicating school resources and energies to the purpose, and developing parent skills and knowledge.

THE PROBLEM

Parent involvement was the number one issue that informants talked to us about in our interviews. By parent involvement we mean parents engaging in their children's learning. This engagement might take the form of helping with homework, attending PTA or PAC meetings, volunteering in the classroom, or joining a parent committee. Parent involvement is such a critical issue because it creates a kind of social capital for students, a human resource upon which children can draw. This social capital results in parent standards for their children's behavior, rules that students share, and a school environment that supports all students. When this form of parent involvement exists in a school, it can even make up for its absence in individual families.

Many informants had very clear creative visions of what parent involvement should be like. In many cases, what passes for parent involvement in the districts falls far short of those visions.

Having a written policy that bilingual, migrant and Native American parents each have their quarterly Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings is not equivalent to parent involvement, nor does it create or ensure parent involvement. District administrators admit that the PACs are often esoteric and do not address parents' general and frequently pressing concerns. It is all too easy for the PACs to be set up to meet the program regulations and to become special-interest groups, rather than open to the concerns of all program parents. PACs can also be a pro forma effort to meet a federal requirement. Parent involvement grows out of Anglo school staff understanding and attitudes towards Native American and Hispanic families. It reflects the local community and parent concerns. Schools foster it by making accommodations for parents from non-middle-class, non-Anglo cultures, by cultivating strong parent leaders, and by desiring to share power.

Where do parent involvement policies and efforts originate?

Parent involvement efforts originate from the state down to the school building levels. For example, the state's migrant education program has two parent trainers that serve the entire state. While these state positions set an example and underscore the need to help parents develop the skills needed to work with the schools, it seems unlikely that true parent involvement can be fostered downward from the state level.

Most districts and many school boards have parent involvement *policies.* These policies may include:

- Inviting Native American and Hispanic parents to run for office on the school board.
- Hiring more bilingual/bicultural staff.
- Scheduling meetings and activities at times that are convenient for parents.
- Providing child care and interpreters at parent meetings.
- Scheduling smaller, less intimidating meetings.
- Scheduling meetings on the same day of each month to allow parents to plan for the meeting.

Other districts develop their parent involvement policies at the building level. Individual buildings may be required to develop annual parent involvement plans that are reviewed by the superintendent and school board. In one district, these building plans are circulated and used as idea sources by principals in the district.

Some informants told us that parent involvement is up to the individual classroom teacher. Extended family member involvement was most often described as a building-level or teacher-initiated activity. Individual teachers design activities to attract specific groups of parents. For example, a teacher organized a club for Hispanic parents that meets once a quarter. At these meetings, the students plan and host the meetings, and the parents are proud and eager to see their children in these positive leadership roles. In another school, a preschool pizza night was scheduled for the entire family which included entertainment by the children. Again, this was a big success—parents had a comfortable social context in which to interact with school staff.

From the national to the building level, parent involvement is claimed to be critical for students' educational success. However, in most districts, there is little or no money to support it. Perhaps this is why it continues to not be taken seriously in most settings:

> *"People all over the country are saying, 'Parents have to get involved and this is our number 1 priority.' But when it comes to money, they don't budget for parent involvement. So who is going to do the work?"*
>
> *Parent involvement coordinator*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts use legally mandated structures like the PACS to involve parents.

Parents whose children are served in Chapter 1, migrant, bilingual and Indian Education programs have an opportunity to get involved in their districts through the PACs legally required by these programs. The PACs can be a means for parents to get their concerns on the district agenda. Districts with PACS that capture and nurture parent involvement:

- Inform parents of their rights and responsibilities as PAC members.
- Train parents in how to conduct meetings and in the laws and regulations that govern the programs.
- Provide child care.
- Publicize meetings and make it clear that interpreters will be provided.
- Encourage and help parents to determine the group's agenda.
- Explain the district's use of the particular program budget (e.g., migrant) to the parents so that parents understand how and why funds are allocated.

Schools are creative in successfully drawing in parents.

In schools that have strong parent involvement, we found that:

- The school has a system and a plan in place that spells out how parent involvement will be promoted. It may be a district-wide plan, or it may be a building-level approach.
- Teachers and staff who are good at developing parent involvement are utilized for this role and are rewarded for their success.
- Staff are persistent in asking parents for help, and inviting parents to play a role in their child's education. For example, Head Start programs in the area were cited as successfully reaching out to parents and family members, holding their meetings in community settings.

  The literature on home-school interaction with Hispanic parents (Baca & Cervantes, 1984: Casuso, 1978; Figler, 1981; New York City Board of Education, 1958: Sour & Sorell, 1978) supports the need for a personalized style of interaction. In Harry's (1992) ethnographic study of families and the special education system, one Puerto Rican mother explains: "There is something missing here. I think it's too impersonal, you know?" (p. 214)
- Parents have a major voice in setting the agendas for meetings.

- School staff help create a "safe" environment for parents at the meetings by dressing casually, coming as parents themselves.
- Schools include paraprofessionals in the meetings and use them to present information in non-academic and non-technical terms that parents can understand.
- Parents feel comfortable coming into the school building—they know where the office is, and staff exhibit welcoming behavior and attitude.

Schools realize that they may not always get a second chance with parents. Parents' honest attempts to get involved may be squelched before they get very far:

> ***"Some of the parents don't know which side of the building to come in, and if they happened to be coming down the hall, and somebody asks them, 'What are you doing here?' they'll just leave. They'll never come back. 'May I help you?' would be more helpful."***
> ***Elementary teacher***

- School staff provide translation assistance for Spanish-speaking parents:

> ***"That encourages them to come in and feel that the school is here to help not only the children, but also the parents."***
> ***Elementary teacher***

- Schools find things that parents are comfortable doing, rather than trying to fit parents into activities the school staff think parents should be doing.

Informants cited the need for more opportunities for parents to work in the classroom as tutors. Barriers include transportation costs and parents' need for income.

- School administrators as well as liaisons communicate with parents about appropriate issues. For example, the principal communicates with the parents about student attendance because he or she can be more effective in this matter than the liaison staff.
- Bilingual/bicultural school staff escort new parents to meetings to make them feel comfortable. Personal relationships with someone at the school are especially important for parents who are not proficient in English.
- Schools recruit individual parents representing different minority backgrounds to participate in the school's parent groups.
- The school requires all parents to attend a parent/teacher conference to discuss their child's program. The focus of these meetings is on the individual child, rather than a general open house occasion. School staff stay in close communication with the parents if the student is in trouble.
- The district provides training for parents in how meetings are conducted, how decisions are made in the district.
- The district makes parents feel as if what they say is important.
- The schools use sports and other cultural activities to attract parent interest. Parents enjoy coming to the school to see their children perform. In one district, sports activities bind the parents and the entire community together. What is it about sports that gets parents involved?
    - It's positive—parents can watch their kids doing well.
    - It's not esoteric—it's accessible to everyone.
    - It's entertainment—it's free, and it instills a sense of community in parents: Anglo, Hispanic, and Native American alike. In a rural area, it may be the only show in town.
- The school makes regular contact with parents to share their child's successes and achievements—and not only to tell parents about their child's problems.

It is always difficult for parents to hear that their child should be held back or referred to special education. However, when this is the only communication they receive from the school, parents feel unsatisfied with the reasons and justifications they receive for the school's recommendations.

As a bilingual teacher in Beth Harry's (1992) study explained:

> *"I told the administration, 'Every time you guys call on me, it's to tell the family, "Your son is in trouble," "Your daughter's going to fail." I don't want those contacts unless you give me time to build some positive ones."' (p.214)*

Too often our informants described parent involvement as what the district does to act upon parents—sending out a newsletter, holding two PAC meetings a year—rather than an interactive process in which parents take an active role.

Schools give parents information about their child's program, problems, and progress. Parents want more information about how their children are doing in school. They say the schools give them information about the general programs, but not enough about their individual child's performance. For example, even the president of a PAC felt he had not yet had an opportunity to provide input into his child's program, although he was well informed about the district's programs in general.

Parents want to be notified as soon as their child is in danger of failing or being suspended on account of poor grades or absences. Instead, parents often don't learn that their child is failing until they get the report card, or until their child is so short of required credits that the child can't graduate with his or her peers.

The confident parents who understand the system are able to contact the school to find out how their child is doing. Many other parents are scared to approach the teacher, the principal, the administration, or the school board:

> *"I think it's a lack of confidence in their own self. A lot of our parents haven't finished school themselves, don't have a job, are not employed. So we have a lot of family situations where they want to help their children, but they don't know how."*
>
> *Native American elementary teacher*

The result is that school staff don't communicate with parents who may most need to work closely with the teachers.

Parents suggested that teachers have some routine way of letting parents know about problems as soon as they occur, and telling parents how their child can make up the grade. Parents may try to call to talk to the teacher, but it's difficult to reach teachers by phone. Teachers don't always return parents' calls. Parents thought that there were simple solutions to these problems. Strategies that parents suggested included:

- Having phones in the classrooms enhances parent involvement. When there are only a few phones in the building, parent-teacher interactions are hampered.
- Holding more open houses, especially at the middle and high school levels—at least two or three times a year, in the evenings or whenever parents can attend.
- Initiating closer, prompter communication with parents when their child has behavior problems, or is threatened with suspension.
- Holding an inservice day for parents.
- Providing incentives for parents to attend meetings.
- Involving parents in setting up a grievance procedure that parents can follow when they have a problem. Parents would have ownership of the process, and would know what to do when they wanted the school to take action:

> *"Now what do I do? Do I do it in writing? Who do I actually confront? Do I go to the principal or who? They should have an actual plan."*
>
> *Native American parent*

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Schools support community goals and interests.

There is a question of how far schools should extend themselves for community goals. However, if the goal is to involve parents, the "carrot" to entice them may be to start with parents' foremost concerns. Schools then start communication rolling on this common ground. Schools that are serious about working with parents have their ear to the ground and listen to community concerns that affect local families.

Schools are missing opportunities to take advantage of a very supportive group of parents who want to improve their communities:

> ***"Instead of getting the parents on your side, you're getting them against you."***
> ***Parent involvement coordinator***

These parents look to the schools to help them accomplish broader minority community goals. Parents were very concerned with the local crime in their district, after-school programs, community cleanup, and the use of school facilities for sports. These concerns were important enough to the parents to bring them together and to the school doors to enlist school assistance or support.

In one district, two exemplary district programs originated from ideas suggested in a parent needs assessment conducted by the Indian Education Committee:

- A summer reading program geared to minority students who are failing.
- Native American language and culture programs offered in the schools.

In another district, parents got together on their own to meet about cleaning up the community. This has been successful because: parents initiated the group meeting agenda and organized the meetings; and, an administrator attended, supported them, but refused to take the leadership role:

> ***"I said, 'Naah, this is your community. You people do that. I'll help you. I'll give you access to resources we can from the district, but you gotta do it.' And I've taken my shots from that, but I believe that nobody is going to take this community back unless it's the community itself."***
> ***District administrator***

In another district, the parents came to the PAC meeting wanting to discuss ways to reduce crime and to develop after-school programs to keep their children off the streets. The parents met several times on their own in their homes, but no school support was provided. This concern was not seized upon by the district as an agenda item for the PAC. Instead, one of the major topics for discussion at the PAC was attendance at the annual state meeting.

In another district, parents came to the district requesting use of a school field for community sports. The parents were told that a field was available in a community 10-15 miles away. They felt that they had a right to use the local field, and the school missed an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with local parents.

When districts are unresponsive to parent requests and concerns, they create a group of very persistent, stubborn, disenfranchised parents as leaders, because only parents with these characteristics will stick it out. The less aggressive parents give up. So, through their inaction, the districts encourage the development of a group of angry, aggressive, and distrustful parent activists.

Examples of parent concerns

Parent desire to participate in budget decisions for bilingual, migrant and Native American education programs.

Parents were asked to provide input into the district's budget proposal for its bilingual program. The school, however, never shared the final budget or program plan with the parents. Parents felt that they were asked to be involved in this decision making process only as far as the district let them. Rather than being used in a truly advisory role, they were given token levels of involvement. As a result, the parents felt used. They felt that the district needed them only in order to apply for federal money. Once the district received the money, the parents didn't hear from the district again until it was time to seek another grant.

Parent desire for schools to appreciate cultural differences. Parents and schools often work together better when migrant and bilingual students are in the elementary grades, than when students reach middle school. Districts tend to have more adequate bilingual staff at the elementary level, so parents can communicate more easily. The process breaks down as school resources thin, and as the gap widens between school and parent expectations of older students. The school regards high school-aged students as nearly responsible adults, whereas many Hispanic parents feel they are still responsible for their teenagers and their lifestyle. This results in problems when the schools stop keeping parents closely informed of student attendance and grades.

Staff attitudes influence parent involvement.

In some schools, staff create opportunities to support parents' high expectations for their children. Rather than contacting parents only when their children have problems, these staff plan programs at which students show off their accomplishments, for example in the dance and music of their native culture. Informants who told us about these programs said that they were extremely popular among students and parents.

Parents are frequently confronted with discussions and reports of their children that are entirely negative. This negative climate defeats district attempts to foster parent-teacher communication. It is a very punishing experience to hear only negative things about your child, and no parent wants to sit through that kind of discussion:

> ***"I asked the teacher, 'Is there anything that my child can do that is good in your eyes?'"***
> ***Native American parent***

School staff acknowledge that parent involvement efforts are often met with suspicion by minority parents who have historically been ignored or treated unfairly by the schools and other systems. Other informants noted that minority parents don't attend parent meetings because staff have negative attitudes about Native American or migrant parents, or are not interested in getting to know these parents and how they think. Some parents stay away because of staff prejudice.

Staff may communicate their negative attitudes in more subtle ways towards minority parents and students. For example, a district may emphasize *changing* parents so they will better prepare their children for school—thus communicating a lack of respect for the parent's culture. When schools emphasize strategies to help parents to work with and conform to the school system, rather than vice versa, the message is that parents not schools need to be changed, and that schools do not value parent contributions.

Schools make accommodations for Spanish-speaking parents.

Schools that have successful parent involvement recognize that the language barrier prevents many Spanish-speaking parents from getting involved in the schools. These schools make serious efforts at accommodating language differences, including:

- Translating all notices into Spanish, and maintaining a high quality of translation.
- Providing interpreters for all school board and parent meetings, and not expecting parents attending the meeting to serve in this role.
- Providing interpreters at parent teacher conferences, and not expecting the parents' children to serve in this role.
- Providing other assistance at meetings, such as translation through FM headsets.
- Translating and mailing out all meeting notes.
- Translating all special education forms into Spanish.
- Using the local radio and TV stations to advertise school meetings and activities.
- Finding activities and roles that parents find comfortable.
- Making accommodations for parents who are not literate in Spanish or English.

Unfortunately, informants told us that "It still happens that there won't be a translator present at a school board meeting," or that the school board puts the translators and the Spanish-speaking parents at the back of the room. The president of a migrant/bilingual PAC may be expected to fill in as interpreter for the meeting. In some districts, notices are sent out in English only. The quality of district translations is sometimes poor—and parents stop paying attention to notices that don't make sense. One informant suggested that in order to really give Spanish-speaking parents an opportunity to participate in meetings—to ask questions and provide input— there should be a separate, simultaneous meeting conducted in Spanish, since relying on a translator denies parents the opportunity to actively participate.

By not ensuring that Hispanic parents receive information in Spanish, the district excludes these parents. The result is a loss of trust and information vital to their children's success. For example, Hispanic parents were not informed about a district's magnet programs until after the announcement went out in English. Hispanic parents thus had less time to prepare for and participate in the meetings. When several Hispanic students later failed in their magnet programs, this oversight added to the Hispanic community's feelings that the district had not seriously considered their recommendations for bilingual education.

Schools make accommodations for migrant parents.

School informants were sensitive to the work demands of migrant parents that make it difficult for them to attend parent meetings. Accommodations they described included scheduling meetings and home visits around the parents' schedules.

Within the population of migrant parents, families have a range of needs depending upon how migrant they are. In some districts such as Mabton, families return to the area for only a short time each year. In other districts, families may settle out, or they may use the area as a base from which to migrate to other areas. Migrant parents who are newly arrived from rural areas of Mexico or Latin America may have little education themselves, requiring different recruitment and communication strategies on behalf of the district from strategies appropriate for U.S.-born migrant parents. Districts recognized that they may need to help raise a parent's awareness about the value of education. Parents from rural areas of Mexico, for example, come with very different expectations about education:

> ***"The kids may want to attend school. But the parents are saying, 'You don't need to, why should you?'"***
> ***Case manager***

These attitudes can be changed through one-to-one discussion with parents, rather than through classes. These parents need to know someone they can come to for help in understanding the school system.

Because migrant parents in some districts are such a diverse group, they may lack the cohesiveness that facilitates parent groups in organizing and working together. Informants felt that the more "traditional" the parents are, the less they participate and the more they simply comply. They become involved only after they have had time to learn the system.

Some districts encourage migrant parents to volunteer in the classroom. Informants report that parents are eager to be involved and could be more active if there were more Spanish-speaking staff.

For many districts, the home visitor is the parent involvement component for migrant families, although this role is not included in the home visitor's job description. Home visitors are supposed to recruit migrants into the migrant program, but because the visitors speak Spanish and parents feel comfortable with them, the parents look to them for help in dealing with the school system.

Schools are willing to listen to and negotiate with parents.

Schools that are successful in working with parents are willing to come to the table with parents and, if necessary, offer parents the training needed to become "insiders" to the school system.

When parents attempt to work with districts, they sometimes feel they are being ignored. They may write letters to the superintendent that are not answered. Very simple parent concerns, such as the quality of the lunchroom food, are rebuffed. The schools group concerns and complaints from minority parents in the general category of: unreasonable, uneducated, not worthy of consideration. For example, in one district, the parents' main concerns were funding and labor regulations. The parents were very worried that if their children can't work, they will get into trouble, join gangs, or hang out unsupervised because the parents have to be in the fields. Before the labor rules, the parents could keep an eye on their children while they worked together. The schools viewed the labor rules as a way of insuring the students go to school. Parents raised the issue at a PAC meeting, but were made to feel that because the regulation was already in writing, it couldn't be changed.

In some districts, parents have difficulty asserting their rights and needs. In other districts, school staff have difficulty responding to parent concerns in a nonadversarial way. These districts need help from someone who can work with parents and staff together to open communication, so they can get on with working together to solve often serious local problems:

> *"Parents need someone to speak to them at a real common level—someone who has gone through training to develop communication skills. Because when you start talking about your own family, you develop this anger, and you dwell on all the negative. But once parents establish this kind of communication, they can focus on the children."*
>
> *Native American parent*

> *"But if they get a parent in there who seems a little backwards, doesn't have education or something, they seem to run over them a little. They tell them what they're spending their money for. They don't want to ask them. Kind of like a rubber stamp."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Parent attempts to communicate may be unsophisticated. A parent's letter may reflect a lack of understanding of process and the system that an "insider" would have. Some school staff dismissed these attempts at communication as unrealistic, uneducated, and not grounded in the realities of the school system. When the school-parent interaction becomes adversarial, frustrations mushroom on both sides.

Some administrators told us that parents don't respond to their surveys about training needs or PAC agendas—they appear to be looking to the schools to suggest the speakers and topics for the parent involvement agenda. But it may be that parents need to be brought along to make those choices—that it may not be apparent to parents what issues they should be most concerned about. Or perhaps the speaker method of getting information is not relevant or comfortable. Or perhaps parents don't really feel safe in making their preferences known. But districts should question when parents are silent. Schools should ask how do they help parents to recognize their major concerns.

An administrator described his approach to nurturing parent involvement:

> *"The more parents and the community become knowledgeable, the more we can share. It seemed for a long time I was guilty of this as a principal—thinking these were things that nobody else really cared to know or would understand, so I never really related a lot about curriculum development or staff development or certifications. But now, the more the parents are finding out about this, the more the community finds out about it, then the more I get to talk with them, and the more communication there is. I think that's the beauty of training people across the board. That way I can meet with parents and say, 'Here, let's discuss this. You don't know about test scores, then we'll bring in somebody to discuss test scores so that you know more about test scores.' So I don't feel inhibited by the administration that I can't share things."*
>
> *District administrator*

Successful schools realize that parents are not insiders and that non-white, non-English-speaking, and low-income parents particularly have great difficulty moving from the status of outsider to insider. *To balance the equation, schools invest in educating parents so that they can become insiders and participate in the process.* They do this by developing negotiation skills among parents. This results in improved understanding among parents of the constraints of the school system, and an increased ability to frame their concerns in ways that school staff can respond to:

> *"I think if parents were invited, they would come to meetings. And if we said, 'We think you have something to share and it's important,' and if we offered them training to understand these meetings. Because it took me a long time to*

> *understand what we were doing—the minutes, the things connected with meetings that are confusing to parents who have never been to a meeting. We put our agenda on the invitations. But I think the problem is that the district is the one who makes the agenda. And it may be that parents don't see any interest in what's on the agenda. Or they may not understand. Some of the parents don't read."*
>
> *Indian Education staff*

In her study of Spanish-speaking parents, Harry (1992) emphasizes the school's responsibility to go beyond the letter of the law in creating a parent-professional partnership:

> *To propose that it is up to the parents to bridge the gaps created by ethnicity, poverty, exceptionality, and language is to engage in the process of blaming the victim. Parents are the indirect recipients of services, and while it may be argued that they should develop a "consumer approach" to evaluating these services. . . this is particularly difficult for parents who are at economic, linguistic, and cultural disadvantages. (p. 101)*

Responsive schools realize, however, that there must be movement on their side too. These school staff listen to parent concerns and try to find ways to respond to them. They realize that the schools cannot wait until parents shape up and act right before they are willing to negotiate with parents:

> *"Parents have been trying for years to get involved with the school and because the school doesn't start it, it was coming from outside, it was coming in, they [the school] didn't get involved because they didn't have ownership. But now the school has ownership because the administration is involved."*
>
> *Indian Education staff*

Parents alone cannot create the climate necessary within the school or the administration to develop good parent involvement programs. Interest and initiative must come from the school or district power base, which parents don't control.

Schools cultivate parent leaders.

Leadership positions in the PACs, PTAs, Indian Education Committees, school boards, and other school meetings demand that parents have or obtain a set of skills—skills in meeting protocol, organization by-laws, consensus building, parent rights, and other school rules and regulations.

Many white, middle-class parents come to leadership positions with some of these skills mastered as part of their education and experience in their jobs or other organizations. Many migrant and Native American parents come to these positions with little or no previous experience in these roles:

> *"If they could just bring it down to simpler terms, they might get more parent participation. The bureaucratic terms scare people. We need an orientation for the parents in the program—make it simpler for them to understand."*
>
> *Native American parent*

> *"Their own kid, they'll come in and talk about their own kid. But the program level—they feel so inadequate, that they get here and they feel like they don't understand and don't belong."*
>
> *District administrator*

These parents are then faced with overwhelming tasks: learning the by-laws; understanding the programs they are to govern or guide; and learning the skills to lead, build consensus, and run meetings. Parents who are effective must devote tremendous amounts of time, and must make a personal commitment to the job.

Districts that take these parent positions seriously provide incoming parent leaders with training and information necessary to fill their roles. These districts also make certain that the by-laws of parent organizations like the PACs support the cultivation of strong, effective parents with the bargaining skills and understanding of rights, responsibilities, laws, and regulations needed to work with district staff on an equal footing. For example, if the by-laws limit the parent committee chairperson's term to one year, and if it takes the average parent at least one year to understand the school system, this policy in effect undermines the goal of a strong parent leadership.

Once the district decides to develop parent leadership, district staff have to be able to stand back and watch:

> *"I've really worked hard to be a facilitator. That's more frustrating than not having people at a meeting—that's to watch things go along, and 'Uh-oh, I could have kept this more on track if I was running things, I could have got us out of here in two hours instead of four hours.' But I try to sit back and let them work with it. Can't get too excited about what doesn't go well, because hopefully next time it will."*
>
> *District administrator*

Some parents of necessity groom themselves for these leadership positions. For example, one Native American parent described the low self-esteem he felt when he began to get involved with the schools:

> *"I finally started getting involved with the school. I thought of myself—I thought of them as up here, and I was down here, and I couldn't get myself up there, because I feel they can't put themselves on my level. They stay up here, we have to go up there. And by getting employed by the tribal Head Start, I learned to like myself more. To where when I go into the schools to talk to any of the teachers, I've learned they're working for me. I don't go in with my tail between my legs. I let them know what I want. And I think that's what our Indian parents need to understand. They feel that they're up there governing us, governing what our children have to do. They need to be educated—they're there because our kids are in there."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Many Anglo parents learn and practice their leadership skills in PTA and PTO meetings. We found that this was a parent involvement system quite separate from the PACs and Indian Education Committees, with little overlap. We were told of one Mexican-American parent who attended a PTA meeting:

> *"She was the only one [Mexican] there. Nothing was translated. She was lost. She had questions, but they were ignored. So she never went again. She still goes to the PAC meetings."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

We were told that even parents from settled-out Hispanic families as well as Native American families who have been in the valley for generations don't attend the PTA meetings:

> *"This man asked me if I belonged to the PTA. I said, 'No, I'm Indian.'"*
>
> *Native American parent*

Schools are trying to define parent versus school responsibilities.

Sometimes, districts seem to be doing everything they can to make it easier and more attractive for parents to come to meetings, and yet parents still do not come. In certain cases, schools are aware that the parents are no longer involved with their child's education—for example, if the child is older and emancipated, or is no longer living with parents. Some districts have cautiously assumed some of these traditionally parental responsibilities—for disciplining or nurturing students—but have had to step back when the parents decide to become reinvolved. Schools in the region are facing the challenge of identifying the school's responsibilities for a highly diverse population of students, diverse not only across the broad categories of ethnicity and race, but also diverse in family structure, traditional cultural and religious orientation, income, migratory status, and level of dysfunction.

Differences between parent and school perceptions about each other's roles may result in inequities in treatment of minority students:

> *"I think that's where most of the conflicts, or a lot of the inequities occur—interpretations or perceptions that each side has of what the other should be doing—how they should be responding and how they should be communicating."*
>
> *District administrator*

Determining policies for student groups is not as simple as considering one or two variables, such as ethnicity and age. Schools must become sensitive to the important differences within ethnic groups in order to develop successful working relationships with parents and parent representatives:

> *"That's what you need to remember, that even your Anglo families are not all the same. They don't practice the same religions. Why should we be categorized all as one? We're all different."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Parents face language, class, cultural and other barriers to involvement.
Informants told us about numerous barriers that prevent Native American, Hispanic, and migrant parents from being more involved with the schools:

- Parents feel intimidated by the setting of the parent meetings. The formal atmosphere of the administration building, for example, makes them feel out of place.

  Attending a school meeting may evoke a strong emotional response that makes it difficult for some Native American parents to communicate. These parents may need to be accompanied by an advocate until they feel comfortable in the school setting.

  Many Native Americans have been taught to listen out of respect for the other people and their ideas. They may appear aloof to the non-Native American. They may place less value on interaction and may not share the Anglo cultural norm that "you must speak up for yourself." Committee meetings that require Native American parents to participate in discussion may be particularly difficult, as parents may not be comfortable with the pace and the frequent interruptions common in Anglo conversations.

  Some migrant and Native American parents were described as lacking interest in their children's education because they did not come to meetings and were not involved at the school. Schools must distinguish between a parent's lack of motivation in the child's education—and lack of motivation in participating in activities whose form and style are not comfortable to the parents.

- Parents face a language barrier in not being able to communicate at the same level as English-speaking school staff. Parents feel they have no place to go and to complain if they are unhappy with services. Parents are partly locked out by the interwoven power structure that extends across community agencies and organizations—the school, the school board, the city council.

  Many Hispanic parents have experienced disrespect and attacks to their dignity when adequate interpreters have not been available at school meetings. These meetings are a painful reminder that since the parents don't speak English, or don't speak it well enough to understand the meeting content, they are not welcome in the school system. The districts need to really work to earn the trust of these parents.

  Parents who are assertive enough to speak to school staff experience further obstacles. For example, a Hispanic parent asked school staff to call her whenever her daughter was absent. The school staff did not do this, even though they agreed to call. The problem is compounded because the parent cannot call the school herself to find out if her daughter has been absent because no one in the office speaks Spanish. When she visited the school, she could not find an interpreter. So now, in order to communicate with the school, the parent calls another program that has bilingual staff, and the program relays the message to the school through an intermediary.

  A Native American parent reflected on the differences in teaching styles between traditional Native American families and the public schools, and how that influences his interactions with the school:

  > *"Is that the way I learned: Is that the reason I have English—when I try to talk—is that why I'm always talking backwards? Some people can get to the core of the feeling, just zap-zap-zap. Indian people, they come from the outside, they watch and observe, then they give comment."*
  >
  > *Native American parent*

- Parents, because of a history of poor communication with the school district, are suspicious of everything the schools do.

  For example, parents feel that the schools spend money foolishly. They even suspect the school officials of deriving personal benefit from special bilingual and migrant funds.

- Non-middle-class parents feel out of place and lack the resources and experiences that enable middle-class parents to negotiate in the school system.

  In another study (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990) of working-class, Spanish-speaking parents, the process of making the parents realize that the skills and procedures that help their children were acquired abilities was empowering—realizing that they could learn these skills made the parents feel less helpless and isolated.

- Migrant parents who are non-residents may fear getting involved because of their illegal status.

- Migrant parents, because of their lifestyle, need to see immediate results. This is a fact of life for them. They may therefore have less patience with the lengthy process of effecting change in their district or school building.

- Many Hispanic parents have a very respectful attitude towards teachers that may result in parent compliance and reticence to question or challenge school practices.

- Native American parents may have had very negative experiences with the public school, boarding school, or mission school systems that color their feelings towards the schools:

  > ***"I was very easily intimidated by teachers that would come along with their yardsticks or their rulers and rap somebody on their knuckles or head. I remember those teachers. Some of them are still teaching in the schools my children attend."***
  >
  > ***Native American parent***

  Many Native American parents faced serious and disabling threats to their self-esteem at the hands of teachers who they must now approach anew. Some of these feelings are tied to specific staff who the former students, who are now parents, must approach on behalf of their children. Parent-school communication is hindered by childhood memories of humiliation at the hands of these teachers:

  > ***"Parents are not able to talk to school staff because they can't trust that whatever they have to say would be taken in the right way—without their putting a judgment on it. They just can't do that."***
  >
  > ***Native American parent***

  Finding ways to mediate these deeply ingrained attitudes among Native American parents will take imagination and tremendous effort. In the ideal situation, school staff would approach parents on their own turf. Kindergarten orientation would be held at the longhouse. Administrators, including the superintendent would attend in-home coffee meetings with the parents:

  > ***"Many Indian parents would just glare at administrators and not say anything. Some of them were very emotional over the grief they felt. Some were just concerned about transportation."***
  >
  > ***Native American parent***

  Approaching parents on their own turf can be a humbling experience for administrators and teachers. They are confronted with tremendous anger and resentment. Persistence, a willingness to listen, implementation of change that is based on parent suggestions—all these help to promote conciliation and progress toward cooperation and positive change.

- Some parents simply cannot get involved with the schools, even at the level of attending meetings, because of their family responsibilities. This won't change unless things change dramatically and the schools can offer child care or meals, so that parents who work don't have to sacrifice their family's needs.:

40

> *"Now an ideal person to really get in there is a single adult—no kids, no family ties, and all the time on their hands. They need someone in there who really knows what they're doing. I tried but I didn't know a lot of what was going on. So I stayed back and watched. I know of one parent leader—she's a single mother, she has three kids, and she's always traveling. And she does a lot for our Indian people, but the kids get left behind. And that's one reason why I don't get too involved. Because I'm not leaving my family—my family comes first. Even if we're just going to be home all evening actually at the same time, that comes first before running over to a meeting and saying something that might help."*
>
> *Native American parent*

On the other hand, some migrant parents who are very busy regard their evenings as time for taking care of family business, and the PAC is defined for them as part of family business.

Even though parents may deliberately choose not to be at meetings, they want more information from the schools about their children's classroom performance. They want the school to have a regular dependable way of communicating with them about their children.

Districts try to take the school into the home.

Districts have various methods of making contact with parents at their homes. The most standard method of home contact is through the district's home visitors. These are often part-time staff who are paid through migrant or JOM monies.

Migrant home visitors have primary responsibility for identifying and certifying migrant students, and one migrant home visitor estimated that about 70 percent of her job was record keeping. We found that in addition to these certification duties, migrant home visitors are often used by the district for interpreting in the office, translating letters and messages, taking notes at meetings with Spanish-speaking parents, writing letters to Spanish-speaking families, interpreting messages, and coordinating meetings.

Migrant home visitors are the primary school district contact for migrant and other Spanish speaking parents. In some districts, these parents come to the home visitors (perhaps the only way in which these parents approach the schools) with a variety of concerns and problems. Some are related to school, others are not. But because of the many responsibilities often assigned to home visitors by the district, they rarely have time left for parent involvement. Home visitors have described their conflict, and their desire to be of more assistance to families who have no one else to turn to:

> *"I think more could be done. There's too many people. I sometimes get frustrated because there's only so much we can do in our job to help, and I've had people come to my house, I've read letters for them, written letters for them—because that's not part of my job, but I want to help them. Like the little girl with the low hematocrit. I had to get the prescription to Fred Meyer [pharmacy] as soon as possible so they could get the medicine. Sometimes I don't know which door is which because I'm swamped. I wish I had more time for the families. A lot come to me, and they have really bad housing here. And these families know me and trust me and ask me, 'Do you know of any house?' And you see where they live, and you wish you could help them more. Get more involved with one family, but then I don't have the time."*
>
> *Migrant home visitor*

It is not surprising that in some districts there is a high rate of home visitor turnover due to burnout.

Native American home visitors are used by districts as liaisons with the child's family. Teachers often rely upon these staff to make contacts with Native American homes. These home visitors will, upon request of a teacher or principal, go to a home to find out why a child has been absent, or explain to the parents that the child needs medical care. They may help determine why a child is improperly dressed, or help find clothes for a student. Native American home visitors are more involved in social service needs than the migrant home visitors, who are more involved with the Certificates of Eligibility (COEs).

Home visitors are also used in some districts to help obtain informed consent from parents of children who have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). If the parents can neither read nor write or have been difficult or impossible to contact, the home visitor may be used as a last resort to obtain a sign-off. In some cases, home visitors described being used in situations for which they are not trained—such as to talk to parents about their child's problems when they have not been trained in counselling techniques:

> ***"So I take the IEP to their house, I tell them, 'You didn't show up for the meeting, sign here and there.' So I'm not in the position to explain it, unless the parent asks me. The parents will ask me—'What's wrong with him?'—because they fear the word psychologist. And they ask, 'Is he all there?' And I say, 'No, no, no, he's just slow in some areas.'"***
>
> ***Home visitor***

Districts vary in their attitudes towards using home visitors. One district uses home visitors to make parents "as comfortable as possible" with school procedures, suggesting that the district's goal is parent *compliance* rather than *active participation or empowerment*. Another district has made a commitment to taking the school to the parents for Native American families. In this district, this policy sent a message to the Native American families that the school staff cared. Entrée to the families was created by the trust that had been built between the parent committee and the district's administrative team.

We found that home visitors very often wanted to become more involved as liaisons between the migrant and Native American families and the school in fostering the participation of these families. These school staff seem to have the family trust that is required to draw parents more closely into school activities. Unfortunately, districts often overlook the opportunity this affinity offers, and district funds for home visitors do not support these parent empowerment activities. Yet most districts have problems with capturing true parent involvement. One solution is to hire a home-school liaison whose sole job is to connect parents and the schools. This position is needed to make the school bureaucracy accessible to the community. Schools somehow need to take the initiative to reach out to parents who are not now comfortable, skilled, or knowledgeable enough to be involved:

> ***"But what the schools are doing, they're not really trying to do anything with the parents, instead of really having them on their side. It would be less work for them, they wouldn't have as many problems with the kids in school because the teachers would have support at home. Someone is needed at the local level, to get something going at the local level to get parents interested and active. The schools have to put money into that effort, and there is not money. That's where the schools are missing out, they're really missing out on all that."***
>
> ***Parent involvement coordinator***

What Ideal Parent Involvement Looks Like—From Both Sides of the Looking Glass

We were able to piece together several different definitions of good parent involvement from what informants in the districts told us.

One picture describes what the district does to make its Parent Advisory Council (PAC) meetings successful:

- PAC meets on the same day of every month at the same time—allows parents to plan.
- PAC board members attend a separate regular planning or executive meeting.
- PAC agendas have some "meat" to them—they address topics that the parents have generated and are really interested in.
- District administrators attend the meetings.
- Teachers attend the meetings.
- Meetings start on time.
- Copies of the agenda are available at the meetings.
- Meetings are well organized.
- Notices for the meetings are mailed out in advance—not the day before the meeting.

In one district, informants described how hard the district has tried to get a decent level of involvement in the PACs. It seems that even if a district tries hard, parents may not come to PAC meetings, especially when many families are very migrant and there is little continuity in parents attending.

The PACs may not be the most effective way to involve migrant parents. The PACs are required by law, but they seem to require a fairly stable, well educated community to have a meaningful parent program. Schools seem to need migrant parent involvement at a completely different level—to get their children to school, to make sure their children have a place to do their homework, to help the school with discipline problems, to stay in town and not take their children out of school during the winter months.

One administrator said that if he could push a button, he would turn off the monthly meetings and turn on parents coming in to the school and volunteering in the classroom with their kids, being there and showing their kids they are still responsible for them, even in the upper grades.

Another picture describes how a district defines an ideal bilingual parent:

- Speaks English, and may have attended U.S. schools.
- Already knows the U.S. school system.
- Values education.
- Is vocal to the degree that they make requests of the district but never demands.
- Has respect for the schools.
- Is very agreeable, but doesn't know too much about what is really going on.

It is not surprising that districts prefer bilingual parents who are compliant and easy to work with. It *is* difficult for Anglo administrators and teachers to accommodate non-English speaking parents who don't understand how federal program budgets are allocated, who face survival issues and must have their children work to supplement their incomes, or who question or demand services for their children.

In districts where parent involvement was flourishing, we observed the following about the parents who were effective in working with the district and leading other parents:

- ▸ Parents know who to contact and what questions to ask. This appeared to be true regardless of ethnicity. To overcome school barriers, however, non-Anglo parents may need an advocate to help identify who to speak with, and how to frame questions.
- ▸ Parents speak to and are concerned about issues that affect all children, not just those of their ethnicity.
- ▸ Parents let the school know when there is something going on in the child's home life that the school should know about.
- ▸ Parents become involved quickly when something goes wrong—for example, if their child's grades or attendance drops.
- ▸ Parents continue to stay interested and involved in their child's programs into the secondary level, where children need continued nurturing and monitoring.
- ▸ Parents are aware of changes in their child's life.
- ▸ Parents appreciate what education can offer their child.
- ▸ Parents take the same approach with administrators that effective teachers take with parents: They find things to praise in the school district. They know that focussing only on negative issues and problems will not lead to compromise and will not encourage an open dialogue.
- ▸ Parents do not expect changes to occur overnight, and they help other parents to understand the slow nature of change. They have faith that things will be better in the future, and they are able to discern and value progress as it happens.

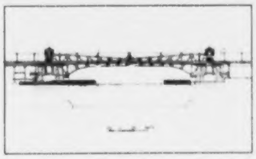
It takes tremendous effort and time for a Native American or migrant parent leader to establish credibility with school administrators and at the same time remain credible to other parents and be able to represent parent concerns accurately. As one parent said, "If I can't be credible to these administrators, I might as well not even try to work with them." To accomplish this, parent leaders must know their district, be accessible to parents, and spend time in their community, rather than lobbying for change in Olympia or Washington, DC. Effective parent leaders must be able to communicate effectively with an alcoholic family and with a congressman. Effective parent leaders are frequently overused, and can burn out from the level of work they are asked to do.

Effective parent leadership must be fostered. Minority communities can promote parent leadership by recruiting parents and providing them with training. The benefits of strong, organized, and respected parent leadership are effective utilization of Indian Education and bilingual funds, and the day-to-day involvement of families in school programs. Effective parent leaders can also make dramatic changes in the attitudes and behaviors of formerly resistant administrators. Both sides need to listen and learn from one another.

These are not surprising findings. In one of the most comprehensive studies (Melaragno, Lyons, & Sparks, 1981) on parent involvement in governance activities, including Title VII bilingual programs, the researchers found that the most active parent advisory councils occurred where school districts specified parent roles, provided training for parents, and had active parent coordinators who facilitated the involvement of other parents. Unfortunately, the main finding of that study was that very few parent councils were implemented in a manner that resulted in more than token parent participation.

Our informants told us that in the ideal school district, migrant and Native American parents would be represented on the school board and in school administration and teaching positions. School boards are the least accessible positions for these parents because these groups have greater numbers of disenfranchised members who are not registered to vote and lack the resources to support candidates.

A POSITIVE MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT



The school atmosphere, staff, curriculum and activities promote student achievement and respect for students from minority cultures.

THE PROBLEM

Schools that do not reflect and respect the cultures of their students undermine their primary goal: educational success for all children. In this report, the terms multicultural and pluralistic education are used to describe a philosophical cornerstone that assures that all school policies, practices, and curricula reflect, respect and value diversity. Cultural sensitivity is one of the positive outcomes found in schools where multicultural education is a cornerstone. By not providing a mirror that allows children to see themselves—who they are and what they bring to the classroom—schools can make students feel unwelcome and out of place. The greatest risk for students in a school that does not have a fundamental commitment to multicultural education, however, is school failure born of policies and curricula that exclude and devalue non-Anglo perspectives.

Class sizes, lack of administrative support, and crowded buildings all inhibit school staff's ability to accommodate cultural and economic minorities. Informants agreed that there are few if any staff who are intentionally cruel or racist or ignorant and that most are caring, empathetic and open-minded:

> *"It's not a good excuse, but it's not intentional. It's one of the insidious things that sneaks up on you without you meaning for it to happen, but nothing has been done to prevent it either."*
> *Bilingual tutor*

How do schools express a commitment to multicultural education?

Cultural sensitivity is expressed in everyday behaviors toward children and families. How cultural differences affect school needs and behaviors informs the activities and policies of the culturally sensitive school. Ideally, all children and families are welcomed and feel wanted and "at home" in the school environment.

The infusion of multicultural values and sensitivities occurs on many levels:

- District and building policies recognize the impact of culture on education and make specific plans to promote and foster cultural understanding.
- Curricula are infused with culturally relevant information and activities.
- Family involvement is carefully planned and designed to overcome cultural obstacles to communication and create a welcoming atmosphere for families.
- Children and staff are encouraged to celebrate and value cultural differences through the use of native languages, festivals and cultural activities.
- Staff who represent the ethnic makeup and languages of the school population are recruited, hired and supported.
- Training that focusses on cultural differences, learning styles, language, and appropriate instructional techniques is provided to teachers and administrators.

Understanding Diversity

Understanding cultural differences—customs, dress, rituals—is only a piece of a much larger pie. Teachers need to be able to deal with all types of diversity: economic, religious, ethnic, and exceptionality. Pluralistic education accommodates all of these differences and provides an equitable education to all groups.

True sensitivity recognizes differences *within* a culture as well as between cultures:

> ***"It's just the understanding that Native Americans are all different. We don't practice the same, we don't sit the same, we don't live the same."***
>
> ***Native American parent***

Not all Native Americans observe traditional practices. They may, however, have deep respect for these traditions. Just as most Catholics who have stopped observing Friday fasting still hold the religious beliefs that inspired these practices, modern Native Americans may not observe the lengthy period of mourning and associated rituals while retaining deeply held traditional religious and cultural beliefs.

Even within families, Native Americans may have very different ways of identifying with their cultures:

> ***"All my family lives on the reservation and we each have different feelings about living here. We have different outlooks. We were never raised traditionally. We were raised to know that we are Indian, we felt close ties to being Indian, we're proud of our heritage, but that's as far as it goes."***
>
> ***Native American parent***

Understanding vs. Accepting Diversity

It seems that one characteristic of cultural sensitivity, which is a term often used in a vague way, is the understanding of differences—having basic information about why a student has different needs. Minority advocates point out that it may not even be desirable to *accept* these differences—for example, the Hispanic father who won't let his daughter go to school because he has a very prescribed future in mind for her—but it *is* important to understand the reasons for the difference, the meaning and origins of it.

School staff who lack understanding of other cultures will be perceived as lacking respect and offending children and parents. And school staff should not penalize students for those cultural differences. This emphasis on staff *understanding* is in contrast to one on *skills* needed by teachers to work with children from different cultures—skills such as how to use a bilingual paraprofessional in their classroom. Effective staff have both the special understanding and skills.

Schools must make some difficult decisions about understanding and accepting differences. For example, informants point out that the Native American student "lives in a different world altogether" from the white student. This is the world of different time schedules and demands of working, food gathering, and attending ceremonies. On one hand, schools are striving to respond to the needs of students from diverse cultures. On the other hand, schools are striving to educate students who can succeed in a pluralistic society. In that pluralistic society, successful students will need to meet some expectations that are quite different from those of the reservation, for example. There is no formula that describes how schools weigh these sometimes seemingly contradictory goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools have a fundamental commitment to multicultural education and value the diversity of their student body.

Multicultural education does not take place during a specified month, week or day of the year. It is ongoing and involves parents and children in all aspects of instruction and school life. Informants yearned for a multicultural perspective among school staff that is more than skin deep:

> *"They really do respect the kids, the only thing is that they're not too familiar with the culture. They know a little bit, but not really enough to help the kids out. Some of them are not able to do even the simplest things to help the kids out."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

Special cultural events are common and relatively easy. These fail, however, when they are superficial, once-a-year events and feature only food and dance. Misguided attempts can do more harm than good:

- A special "Indian Week" can reinforce inaccurate racial stereotypes rather than promote cultural understanding.
- A poor understanding of cultural celebrations can lead to misinformation--such as promoting Cinco de Mayo as a celebration of Mexican independence. Misguided attempts can do more harm than good.

Cultural events and celebrations can in fact make differences between groups even more apparent rather than the reverse. Students whose families have lots of resources get parent support in developing sophisticated projects. This can emphasize the economic and achievement differences between different groups of students and lead to a sense of shame and embarrassment for students with fewer resources.

Some school-sponsored cultural celebrations were viewed as very positive experiences for students, staff and the community. Key features which make these events stand out are:

- The belief that the cultural event was only one component of a larger, school-wide effort.
- The events are supported by ongoing clubs and activities throughout the year rather than just one special event. These clubs help to provide a positive atmosphere for socializing and deter membership in gangs.
- Curriculum adaptations that reflect the culture of children at the school. These adaptations resulted from and support special events.
- The event serves as "yeast" for initiating ongoing activities such as specific classes (e.g., Yakima language) and curriculum adaptations that support the cultural traditions of students.
- Parents are motivated to visit the school and meet teachers when their children are featured in performances.

Cultural activities are most successful when the schools provide resources to support and enhance them. The clubs and activities are viewed as important for school success rather than an after-school enhancement. Difficulties arise, however, when there are no funds to support clubs. For example, parent participation is greatly enhanced when evening meetings offer a meal. Transportation home helps assure that students can attend after-school functions.

Still, we found a feeling among many people, particularly among members of minority groups, that efforts to increase cultural sensitivity in the schools were too limited: "We need more than just making tacos." (School psychologist)

> *"It is less important for students to learn to appreciate ethnic foods than it is for students to understand equal rights. Yet, much of what we have taught under the rubric of "multicultural education" has fallen into the trap of "Tacos on Tuesdays." That is, the trap of teaching about cultures and about cultural differences without teaching an understanding of how cultural differences -- or gender, class and other differences -- contribute to the unified whole of a democratic nation."*
>
> *Mako Nakagawa, State Multicultural Education Specialist*
> *EMPIRE Project, Heritage College*

Informants were careful to point out that school programs can place too much emphasis on culture. One Native American parent felt her daughter's preschool emphasized cultural education more than preparation for kindergarten. She felt that it is the parents' responsibility to teach culture and the schools' responsibility to teach basic skills.

Schools select and adapt curricula and instruction to assure it is culturally relevant and builds upon the traditions of all children in the school.

Our respondents were concerned that merely providing social recognition of cultural differences is inadequate. A measure of a deeper recognition of cultural differences is improved academic performance by minority students and reductions in disproportionate achievement among children of color and their Anglo peers.

Informants saw a need to make fundamental changes in academic programs that go beyond cultural events and become an everyday part of the curriculum. Too often, curriculum adaptations resulted in a "tourist curriculum" where students visit another culture for one day or one week and then return to the monocultural curriculum.

Speaking to students in their native language provides a comforting and welcoming environment. The student knows that he can make his needs known, and that at least some instruction will be provided in a language he understands:

> *"I am a firm believer that if you don't have the language of the child, you can't be culturally sensitive."*
> *Elementary teacher*

Unfortunately, in most buildings with large numbers of Spanish-speaking students, little value is placed on Spanish language or bilingualism. Being bilingual is viewed as a strength in many non-school contexts. However, in some schools, very little is done to encourage bilingualism. There is little recognition that language learning can be a two-way street or that Spanish-speaking children can offer a resource for language learning. We observed that Spanish is even "taboo" in some settings. Although English proficiency is a major goal for monolingual students, those who are allowed to use their native language in certain settings can receive encouragement to accept and value their own culture.

We found many examples of efforts to revise curricula at the building level. An obvious target for these efforts was social studies curricula. Innovative approaches were used to infuse culturally relevant information into other courses as well, such as writing and language arts.

Materials selection posed problems across all districts. Teachers have very restricted choices in materials available from a handful of major educational publishers.

Ideally, schools use positive aspects of culture to enhance instruction. For example, in the Native American culture, honor, respect, and self-discipline are highly valued. Schools can emphasize these concepts to increase the relevance of the curriculum and build upon cultural values.

Schools are sensitive to cultural differences that may not be readily apparent.

Many informants indicated that Native American students differ from Anglo students in many ways that are invisible to the schools. They may, in fact, appear so similar to Anglo students that their cultural and linguistic differences are not recognized. The level of school system or policy accommodation may be much lower for these students because in some districts Native Americans are a "hidden" population.

Perhaps schools are more aware of Hispanic than Native American cultural differences because of obvious language differences. Mexican children speak Spanish. Native American children speak English, but they have subtle, yet educationally significant, linguistic differences that are frequently not accounted for in the educational equation:

> *"...because they hear language from the people in the homes that talk this way. My dad used to say, 'init'—'It's going to be a nice day, init.' And it took me the longest time to realize that there is no such word as 'init.'"*
> *Native American counselor*

Because Native American students' linguistic differences are frequently not recognized, the safeguards assured to Hispanic children (e.g., rigorous evaluation of language for special education assessment) are missing.

Hispanic children, too, can move through school with little recognition of subtle linguistic differences. Many teachers do not recognize the numbers of bilingual children who are not easily identified because they are not receiving bilingual services:

> *"The teachers are in denial. When they are asked how many Limited English Proficient children they have, they will say one or two. And most of their classroom could be limited-proficiency and they don't even recognize it. My opinion is that it's denial."*
>
> ***Paraprofessional***

What are the outcomes for children when their school demonstrates sensitivity to their culture?
Understanding cultural differences and their impact on a student's education will improve the quality of the educational program. When children are educated in an environment which is not welcoming, accommodating and sensitive to their traditions the quality of their educational program is diminished. Students from minority backgrounds are at risk for dropping out of school for many reasons over which the school has little control. However, a "culturally hostile" school environment undermines the quality of services and can tip the scales toward dropping out of school.

We found that many people were concerned that school failure, dropping out, unemployment, and poverty were not recognized as potential outcomes of a school environment that did not accommodate cultural differences. On the other hand, schools that are built on a multicultural foundation can expect positive outcomes:

- A sense of community ownership and involvement in the schools which break down the barriers of separateness.
- Improvements in academic performance by minority students and reductions in disproportionality in school achievement between minority and Anglo children.

Schools and communities are connected.

In the ideal setting, there is a cultural connection between teachers and students as well as a community connection. In the less-than-ideal setting, teachers and administrators commute into the district from all-white neighborhoods and do not share in the culture or activities of the community where they teach. Residents resent the commuting teachers' lack of connection to the children as well as the effect their shopping and spending patterns have on local businesses.

How do teachers express a sensitivity to the culture of their students?
The ideal teacher for a culturally diverse group of students has certain attitudes, skills and knowledge. The teacher's behaviors, actions and expressions create a climate that is conducive to educational success for all students:

> *"Good teachers treat all children the same way and key in on those special needs and those areas in such a subtle way that kids don't recognize they're different."*
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

A key ingredient in making students feel welcome, and a part of the school, is the ability to address cultural differences in a way that is respectful of children and is driven by their needs. Teachers can inadvertently embarrass children with well-meaning efforts to accept or celebrate their culture. At the heart of every cultural activity or expression, there needs to be the recognition that the outcome is to make that child feel welcome, important, and a part of the educational process:

> *"I would have a hard time if they were treated differently, specifically if it's that obvious, because I don't think it should be. I think it's dividing rather than uniting."*
>
> ***Parent***

Successful teachers use their knowledge of different cultures to interpret, predict and understand the behavior of students and their families. Knowledge of a child's culture and community is brought to bear on every aspect of teaching and interaction. School informants cited reasons why enhanced cultural awareness is important:

- Staff need to understand cultural reasons for student/teacher behaviors. There is often an explanation "consistent with the expectations of the culture."
- Cultural expectations would explain why a student is absent or behind academically, or why parents don't attend meetings.
- Anglo expectations of how to behave in some situations differ from Hispanic or Native American expectations.

Profile of the culturally sensitive teacher

Informants listed many characteristics of teachers who are sensitive to the cultures of their students. The ideal teacher would have many of the following characteristics:

1. Has empathy with other cultures and is open to learning more. Does not think he or she "knows it all already." Seeks out and attends inservice training voluntarily, on his own time, rather than only attending on inservice days.
2. Has some knowledge of the culture.
3. Has a deep and sincere interest in the success of individual children in the classroom.
4. Can convey to parents the message, "We're equal. We are both working to help our children."
5. Is accepting of different cultures as opposed to judgmental and rigid.
6. Is able to work with differences.
7. Is warm and caring. Listens to students and parents and pays attention to their concerns.
8. Views every child's work in a positive light. Is able to see value in every child.
9. Has excellent teaching skills, ability to engage children in learning, and presents high-interest activities.
10. Stresses individual responsibility, on a daily basis. Sets high standards and holds students to them. May even be perceived as strict by some.
11. Is vigorous, with ample energy to face challenges that children present.
12. Attends local community and cultural events. Most likely lives in the community and is more likely to attend events and know local people because this is her place of residence as well as workplace.
13. May not be popular with Anglo parents because he or she is dark-skinned and has an accent, but has very positive effects on minority children.
14. Utilizes opportunities to introduce information on specific cultures.
15. Can speak the language of his or her students.
16. Is of minority background/dark-skinned, not necessarily the same as his or her students, but has faced the same barriers that his or her students face.
17. Accepts reasons for absences for cultural/religious ceremonies.
18. Knows something about poverty, drugs, and alcohol abuse.
19. May have lived in another country or served in the Peace Corps.
20. May have adopted a child from another country.

The culturally sensitive teacher is able to put himself or herself in the student's place and is aware that the student:

- Is in a strange country, doesn't understand the language, and may be frightened.
- Is frustrated by learning a second language and trying to do school work in a language he does not understand.
- Is aware of how it might feel to see other children being able to do the work, and not being able to do it himself.

School staffs' behavior demonstrates respect for minority students and staff.

School staff can inadvertently offend parents and students through a lack of understanding of culture, traditions and lifestyle:

> *"I feel a good teacher will have respect for that child just the way he or she is coming in. No matter how they're dressed or what language they speak, rather than trying to take away from them, they should be adding on to what they come with already."*
>
> *Bilingual teacher*

The concepts of honor and respect are very important to Native American people. Unbraiding and not rebraiding a child's hair for a lice check is embarrassing to the child and disrespectful of the mother. Punishing students for absences required for mourning and ceremonies can show a lack of respect to the students.

An important precursor to mediating these problems is to develop the interest and motivation to learn very basic things about the minority culture and to make clear the desire to understand and be told about procedures/policies that are intrusive or offensive.

One of the most obvious expressions of disrespect can be the use of language that is not respectful of people of minority cultures:

> ***"Indians that do obtain employment in the schools must be very thick-skinned. They will face snide remarks, discrimination, and they must be able to observe Indian children facing the same treatment."***
>
> ***Counselor***

There is a culture of tolerance of racism in some buildings that allows remarks to be made and accepted without reprimand or concern for the racial overtones. Informants told personal stories about overheard remarks directed at minority children or staff. Comments like "She's acting like a scared Indian" are made within earshot of children.

Some remarks are the result of an "embarrassing ignorance." For example, teachers ask minority staff questions that reveal a harmful lack of knowledge, such as, "How do you say this in Indian?" In a well-meaning search for help, they can expose their ignorance and offend a would-be ally. Awareness that there are many Native American nations represented in Yakima, each with its distinct language, would prevent this error.

Lack of acceptance at school, discrimination, and racist remarks combined with family dysfunction lead to very low self-esteem among Indian children. Recognizing the prevalence of low self-esteem among Indian children, many of the teachers use counselling services to help build students' confidence. Other teachers do not and may even be uncooperative with counselling programs.

Respectful treatment of minority staff is also an issue that was raised by several informants. In one district, the Johnson-O'Malley staff did not feel as though they were viewed as part of the educational team. They are viewed and treated as separate from the regular school program by the rest of the staff. In fact, some of the Johnson-O'Malley staff are subjected to the same discrimination and rude remarks as the Native American children. In another district, an Indian Education Program professional was not introduced to other staff and welcomed to the building. He was excluded from the building culture and the working teams of the building. These circumstances require Indian education staff to be assertive if they are to be effective.

School staff make the mistake of assuming that all minority staff are paraprofessionals. Native American professional staff have mistakenly been asked to leave professional meetings because it was assumed that they were aides. The minority people feel their dark skin will prevent them from ever being welcomed into the group of educated Anglos.

School districts plan and implement training specifically targeted at improving cultural knowledge and sensitivity for staff and administrators.

School informants were generally in agreement that there is an ongoing need for training and other interventions that promote a school environment that recognizes the importance of children's culture in education. Most teacher preparation programs have not included adequate preparation in this area.

Specific knowledge about the customs and traditions of students is a key tool in any teacher's arsenal. One informant described how important it is for staff to understand the meaning and beauty of the Native American ceremonies, and the need to respect their place in students' lives:

> *"Pow-wows are really important to Indian people. They're beautiful. I go to pow-wows once in a while. I'm not a real pow-wow person, but I support any child that is. And I know they miss school. And I think the district needs to send a message that—'Hey, if you teach on an Indian reservation, then that's what's to be expected. You teach in a culturally different school. You have to work around it. If you cannot, and you're not happy, then go to another district.' That's the way I feel as an Indian parent. I treasure those ceremonies, and I want my children to, also."*
>
> *Native American teacher*

Without a district-wide plan and a top-level commitment, training efforts will be ineffective. Successful efforts are guided by a district-wide priority for preparing staff and administrators to provide a culturally sensitive education, rather than a band-aid or add-on approach. Even in districts that stress inservice training, cultural issues can be largely ignored. Conflict resolution, learning styles, and other generic strategies are favored over inservice that specifically targets culture.

Delegating planning and implementation to individual buildings without district level planning or encouragement results, at best, in scattered efforts that reach a limited number of teachers.

Schools make certain that all teachers participate in inservice opportunities that support multicultural education and cultural sensitivity.

Training for existing teachers and orientation for new teachers was raised frequently by all classes of informants as a critical area of need. When inservice opportunities that deal with cultural issues are offered, many school staff felt that turnout was poor and that the teachers who needed the training the least were most likely to attend:

> *"We end up preaching to the choir so much. And when you force someone to go, it's not going to work, especially when you're talking about values."*
>
> *Coordinator, bilingual program*

Opportunities for inservice training need to be ongoing and teachers need to be encouraged and supported if they are to attend. Supports include scheduling on nights or Saturdays, providing substitutes, and providing stipends for attendance. Optional training, without incentives, has been ineffective.

Inservice training methods for directly addressing cultural awareness and sensitivity are difficult to present and require commitment and tremendous energy. The time constraints of building administrators limit their ability to organize "optional" activities. Often they do not have the resources available to devote to teachers' incentives or to the training itself. Training for cultural sensitivity takes a back seat to other priorities unless building administrators take the initiative and time to seek resources and "fight" for adequate training.

We found different approaches to training:

- The REACH program which operates out of Arlington, Washington (Respecting Ethnic and Cultural Heritage) was used for initial awareness on a district-wide or individual building level. [REACH Center, 239 North McLeod, Arlington, Washington 98223, (206) 435-8682.]
- Principals require teacher attendance at optional district-level training.
- Local administrators are sent to Mexico and Texas or to visit the Yakima reservation in order to study or observe.
- Building-based training is conducted in order to directly address the character and effects of discrimination.

Informants told us that some methods receive mixed reviews in the schools and community. For example, some staff and community members regarded sending school staff to Mexico as unnecessary. There is a large Mexican community in the Yakima Valley that could provide a forum for understanding Mexican culture. Sometimes the simple solutions are ignored in favor of the more exotic.

Our informants cautioned us that being a member of a minority group is not an inoculation against the need for training. For example, many Mexican-American staff have lived in the valley for several generations. Their knowledge of the Mexican culture may be minimal and their attitude affected by their assimilation into the Anglo culture of the valley. In addition, staff may struggle to disassociate themselves from minority students to avoid the stigma that comes with working with minority students.

What is the focus of training for cultural awareness and sensitivity: changing attitudes, providing knowledge, or improving skills?
Attitudes, knowledge and skills are intertwined. Training in one area will affect and enhance the others. All three areas are addressed in effective training. Changes in attitude are facilitated by cultural knowledge and the increased understanding that knowledge will engender. Informants identified specific instructional skills that should be included in training:

- ESL techniques.
- Information about the uses of native-language instruction and patterns of second-language acquisition.
- Information about how culture affects learning. For example, Native American children have greater success in settings that emphasize cooperation over competition.

School principals set a positive tone and promote cultural understanding through their example and policies.

Informants told us that principals who tolerate racist attitudes among staff are at the same time promoting those attitudes. Principals, supported by district policies, are key in assuring that building staff are respectful and accepting of minority children:

> *"Until you really help a person understand what discrimination is, particularly if they have never experienced discrimination themselves, it is very difficult to be sensitive to children of other cultures."*
> *Assistant principal*

The most successful principals tackle the problem directly and find formal and informal methods to change staff attitudes and behaviors.

School districts have policies that address the rehabilitation of hostile staffs and provide principals support in this effort.

When teachers refuse to teach migrant students, or when teachers become openly hostile to minority students, principals have very few choices. One administrator told us that she could choose between forcing resistant teachers to teach migrant students and risking students being harmed by a hostile, unfriendly teacher, or allowing the teacher to teach only Anglo students. Informants felt that an all-too-common approach was to wait for teachers to retire or go away. All of these options are very costly for children and for the building climate.

Unfortunately, there are still examples of hostile building staffs that resist training and change. There is a question about when and how the district or principal should intervene in these situations. When faced with a particularly hostile group of teachers, one district responded by offering training to any school that wanted it. Questions remain regarding methods for identifying staff that need help and methods to address their needs.

What is the relationship between family involvement and a culturally sensitive school environment?
Both school and parent informants pointed out that a culturally sensitive school environment and strong family involvement go hand in hand:

> *"I would love to see an old Indian grandma with her scarf reading or listening to a child read in the classroom. How I would like to see a parent in the hall reading in Spanish or listening to a child read in Spanish. Anytime we have a parent in the building, I guarantee you, the kids feel a little bit better about school."*
> *Assistant principal*

School staff, however, expressed frustration at not being able to get parents into school. They are unable to find a good "match" between the skill/knowledge level of the parent and school activities:

> *"In order to have parents involved in the classroom in a meaningful way, teachers need to truly feel the value of parent involvement instead of the frustration of having parents not show up when they have scheduled them to be there."*
>
> *Principal*

School staff are frustrated by the "horrible track record" of parent volunteers. This has led to an unwillingness on the part of teachers to involve parents who do not honor their volunteer commitments, such as participating in field trips.

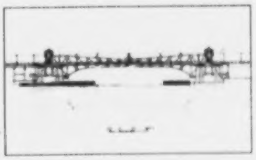
Most parent involvement activities have focussed on the need for "extra hands" in the classroom. These activities tend to attract the parent who is already involved. School leaders see a need to change the orientation of parent involvement from "extra hands" to any methods at all that will "get the parent in the door."

Culturally hostile environments alienate parents and children. When parents are offended by what they perceive as insults to them and their culture the child's relationship with the school suffers. Seeing a parent's embarrassment and frustration can leave a lasting impression on a student at any age.

Parents emphasized that they are not all alike and may not reach group consensus on what it is they want for their children:

> *"We could be a group of Indian parents, but at the same time we could be a group of any people around the country. We still have our own thoughts and views, our own ideas how we're going to help our children."*
>
> *Native American parent*

PROGRAMS THAT CELEBRATE DIVERSITY



Schools create flexible programs and policies to accommodate student diversity.

THE PROBLEM

The schools in the Yakima region face challenges that make them ripe for radical organizational change. Some districts are beginning to tinker at the edges of the problems—setting up alternative programs, negotiating arrangements with working students to make up credits. But, as informants clearly indicated, the present-day realities of culturally, economically, and ethnically diverse districts are dramatically different from the agrarian society in which our 180-day school year was developed. More than tinkering is called for.

Districts that are in touch with the realities of the lives of students and families they serve understand several important basic facts:

- The school changes to fit the needs of its students.
- The school's mission is to help students stay in school.
- Schools and parents need to work closely together to help students who are at risk for dropping out or failure.
- Many students today need an extended day and year-round or other alternative schedule.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The school changes to fit the needs of its students.

Native American and migrant leaders and advocates told us that they believe that they are the only ones who can change the economic status of their people. They believe that educating their youth will improve the entire community, and these youth will become the spearhead for change. It follows that the school's role is to help prepare these youth to lead the way with a good education, skills, an appreciation of their own culture, and the ability to function in a pluralistic society composed of many cultures.

This goal has not often been reflected in school programs. The goal instead has been to make these students "fit" into what the schools already have to offer. School programs that truly reflect the goal of *acculturation* and not *assimilation* would include bilingual/bicultural staff, flexible programs, and compromises that promote competence in the white culture rather than constant requirements to simply conform to white rules:

> ***"If migrant students work in the morning and need to go to school in the afternoon, then their program needs to be set up so they can attend in the afternoon. But our notion is, 'They're not in school, so we're going to kick them out.' Well, that's kind of a contradiction when we're trying to get kids into school."***
>
> ***District administrator***

For many migrant children, the very structure of the school schedule creates barriers:

> ***"Our whole school system is set up backwards for those kids. We should keep the kids in school all summer and give them the winter off so they can go to Mexico and have their vacation because their parents have to work all***

> ***summer. But we do it just backwards—we take vacation in summer, and the kids have absolutely nothing to do because child-labor laws won't let them work and help support the family."***
>
> ***Director of special services***

The need for the school to accommodate to its clients is particularly apparent when the school is located on or near a reservation. As Native American parents noted, teachers in these schools must acknowledge the fact that they are on a reservation. At a minimum, this requires that they learn a little about the culture and traditions, and that they accept as a given that students will be participating in funerals and ceremonies that will require that they miss school. School policies cannot ignore the political reality of the reservation:

> ***"I think the negative feelings come from there not being any people going to the reservation saying, 'Let me learn your ways.'"***
>
> ***Indian Education staff***

Even in districts not located directly on the reservation, Native American students may need to be absent to travel back to their home reservations. For example, a student's family may have to return to his family's home on their reservation in Montana in order to pick up their checks and to maintain residence there for a certain number of months per year.

The school's mission is to help students remain in school.

Districts that serve migrant students recognize that in many cases these students *have* to work. These districts accept this fact as their starting point in planning services and programs. They recognize the barriers these students face in trying to get an education in the traditional high school. Migrant students must struggle with language acquisition, work schedules that conflict with the 8-3 school day schedule, and their need for tutoring and make-up help.

Informants stressed the need for greater flexibility. As things stand, in the words of one informant, having an IEP is an advantage because it provides for more leeway than students in regular programs have. In the words of another administrator, the schools have a standard program that probably does not meet the needs of 80 percent of its students. The realities of its students' lives should be the starting point for planning programs.

Districts have designed various accommodations to help their particular population of migrant students remain in school:

Alternative night school. Programs where migrant students can attend after their work day to earn the credits they need to graduate, or to make up credits they missed while continuing to be enrolled in the regular high school. Some schools in the area resist offering accommodations such as night school:

> ***"They still say that if you need to go to school, you go to the regular system, and that's it. When you tell a kid that this is the only time you can come, you are telling him, 'We don't want you.'"***
>
> ***Project coordinator***

Districts that offer night schools may face resistance from regular teachers. These districts would need to put safeguards into place to insure that the alternative programs are staffed by teachers who can provide strong content area instruction.

Prearranged absences. Schools allow students to apply for a prearranged absence when the student will be working or travelling to visit family in Mexico. Students inform the school when they will be absent, and when they will return. Students can then work with their teacher to earn a half-credit if needed.

Individual contracts with teachers. Students work with teachers to make up school work missed because of the students' work or travel schedule.

Bilingual tutoring, study tables, ESL program. Schools offer migrant students an array of services that support them in their regular programs.

Fifth- or sixth-year programs. Students who are not ready to compete in postsecondary programs with peers because of their language proficiency or lack of academic credits are encouraged to remain enrolled in high school for an extra year or two.

Updated credit policies. These would be equitable with respect to new populations of students, and reflect the realities of the modern world. For example, students would receive foreign-language credit when taking ESL classes.

Equitable attendance policies. Schools that enforce one attendance policy for their athletes and another for their migrant or Native American students are letting students and parents know that they have one set of rules for high-ability students and another for their at-risk students. These inequitable policies may serve to encourage the students already at risk to drop out:

> *"I firmly believe it's against the law to suspend a kid for lack of attendance. As a teacher, I would rather have a kid come one day a week than not to come at all. My son probably missed 15 days a quarter because he played every sport and was a student leader. I think until you have an equitable policy where leaders are held accountable same as low-ability students, and the schools are really for kids—it's not equal."*
>
> *Director of alternative program*

Schools and parents work closely together to help students who are at risk for dropping out or failing.

Successful schools recognize that parents can be powerful allies in keeping a student in school. These schools enlist parent support, often on an individual basis, and they provide parents with information on their child's progress.

In many districts, the schools have difficulty developing this partnership with parents. We heard school staff say that migrant or Native American parents just don't value education. This conclusion often followed from reports of poor parent attendance at PAC or parent meetings.

We also heard parents tell us that they wanted the schools to tell them about their child's progress. In particular, they wanted to know about their child's absences or failing grades *before* their child was about to be suspended, or *before* the spring of senior year when their child does not have enough credits to graduate:

> *"If my daughter fails a class, then we make a point of speaking to that teacher right away and ask them why we didn't know the first week she was failing. 'Well, that's not my job, to call you.' Well, whose job is it? If we don't know, if we don't get the report card, this has been going on for weeks, and we haven't been notified.*
>
> *"If there was a better line of communication—like if they had a form already made up [and] they just had to write the kid's name on it, and the problem, and as of a certain date they're failing, they have this many days to make that up—if they could send that, that would help.*
>
> *"Nobody does it. If you want to know how your child is doing, you try to call, and they say, 'Well, teacher's in a class, they can't speak with you.' You may call for two days—they may not return your call until you come in and wait."*
>
> *Native American parent*

School strategies for communicating with parents. Schools and parents have different ideas about what good communication is. School staff feel that report cards adequately convey the message that a child is failing. Parents know, however, that their children do not always bring home their report cards. The school often views the high school student as a responsible adult who will take home this information, whereas some Native American parents view these students as children. The schools think that the parent's silence regarding a child's failing grades is a sign the parent doesn't care. The parent, on the other hand, feels uninformed about the child's progress.

As one administrator reflected, school district staff used to make more home visits 10 years ago than they do now. And teachers formerly did not have the option of suspending a student—the school counselor or administrator used to provide mediation. As families face more serious problems, the school resources available to address those problems have disappeared, and school actions have become more severe.

Some schools have a policy to personally contact parents if the student has been absent for so many days. However, since many Native American families do not have a telephone, they aren't contacted. Some parents cannot read written notices that are mailed home. While the policy of informing parents is valuable, the methods of implementing the policy often prove ineffective:

> ***"The school staff like to think that the message is going to be received. They need to be open to the real-world facts— these kids are not going to take failing report cards home."***
>
> *Native American parent*

Given the high-risk status of Native American youth, the ideal school policy is to routinely contact parents after two or three absences. Some parents can be easily contacted through a letter or a phone call. The other parents must be contacted personally. Schools that wait longer to inform parents are ineffective in preventing failures resulting from absences.

In addition, parents need to know that a failing grade does not necessarily reflect poor academic performance but excessive absenteeism or tardiness. A student may receive an F status when all other academic requirements have been met. In these cases, students who do not exceed the limit of absences, or who make up time, may not receive a failing grade after all.

Many parents expressed a desire for more individual contact from the schools regarding their child's progress. In some districts, individual staff have initiated individual parent contacts that have benefitted students. For example, one migrant staff member began to talk to migrant parents about the effects of their winter visits to Mexico on their children's education. If parents had to make the trip, they discussed alternatives for the children, such as staying behind with relatives, scheduling the trip to overlap with the child's vacation break, or taking along instructional materials for the child to complete. This type of counselling requires a professional who is sensitive to the boundaries of the family's and the school's interests. But in districts with large numbers of migrant students, such communication could prevent many migrant students from missing up to three months of school.

Fair and equitable discipline policies. Students and families respect discipline policies that are evenly enforced for Anglo, Hispanic, and Native American students. Because attendance is a serious problem in many districts, schools have sought effective ways of ensuring good attendance. One elementary school has established criteria that require parents to attend a meeting at the school to discuss their child's behavior. Staff feel there is a great deal of power in having the parent, the child, and the school find ways to help the child conform to classroom and school rules. These meetings are leveraged against suspension. The school establishes criteria so that, in the most severe cases, the child will be suspended until the parent comes in to help solve the problem. At first, many parents were very upset. School staff were careful to frame the meeting as a way for the parent and school to work together to solve the problem:

> ***"Most parents, if you call them in early enough, are very supportive and helpful. The approach has been very powerful in changing student behavior and in getting parents to accept support and buy into the solution."***
>
> ***Elementary principal***

Schools take risks in resorting to these drastic measures. If the measures are born of genuine concern for children and families and driven by staff who have the goal of improving the school success of children, the risks are minimized. Staff must also believe that parents have to be involved if the problem is to be solved. However, these drastic measures can easily be misused. If staff use them punitively and in a biased way with children from minority groups, they will lead to the same negative outcomes.

Many students today need an extended day or year-round schedule.

As several administrators observed, the current school calendar and schedule are outmoded and designed to meet the needs of an agrarian society. A more flexible schedule and year-round schooling would make it easier for schools to meet the additional needs of migrant and Native American students.

The need for a year-round calendar is particularly obvious in rural isolated districts where there is little for students to do when school is out. Year-round schooling offers a solution to two problems: overcrowding in communities that will not support levies to build new schools, and the need of migrant students to attend more school days to keep up in the regular programs.

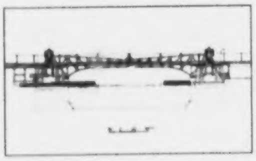
Although there is support within the districts for an extended school year, there are currently no experiments in place. Several districts are providing extended school days. Other districts offer summer programs, but, according to one informant, these begin too soon after the regular session and end too soon before fall session begins:

> *"If we really wanted to do summer school right, it would end the week before regular school begins, and then the kid would get a jump start. As it is now, we just tack more misery on the end of a long school year."*
>
> *Director of special services*

School-year schedules are difficult to change. The school year has always run from fall to summer. Habit and history are barriers to change. The current schedule more often meets the needs of the adults who work in the system, rather than the children and families the system is supposed to serve.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PROGRAMS FOR NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS



Programs for Native American students incorporate cultural foundations and address the problems of low academic performance and alienation from school.

THE PROBLEM

Native American youth experience tremendous failure in school. They have the highest dropout rate of all ethnic groups in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1989). They have the highest rate of enrollment in remedial programs and the lowest rate of enrollment in advanced programs of any ethnic group (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1988).

Most Native American children commence school with language delays that put them behind their peers before they get started:

> ***"Native Americans do not have a first language. That was taken away so many years ago. Our Native American parents and old people are not always proficient in English. Our Indian children come from homes that may be largely nonverbal. They are struggling with the first language when they enter school."***
> ***Native American administrator***

From the day they set foot inside the school, many Native American children are already at a disadvantage.

Few specialized programs are available for Native American students.
Some informants felt that compared to special programs for bilingual and migrant students, there were fewer programs specifically targeted for Native American students. We collected information in school districts with large numbers of Native American students, some up to 65 percent of the total enrollment. Certainly, for these districts where Native Americans make up a significant percentage of the total population, basic education resources are going to support services for these students by their sheer numbers in the district. Still, compared to the "special" programs available for bilingual and migrant children (tutoring, special classrooms, paraprofessional support), the Native Americans had less in the way of identifiable programs tailored specifically for their needs.

Services and policies driven by the needs of bilingual and migrant students benefit Native American students. These include:

- Offering partial credits at the secondary level.
- Tutoring during the first hour of school so that if first period is missed, a "for credit" hour is not missed.
- Counselling to determine reasons for absences.
- Alternative school programs.
- Study table before and after school to make up time.
- Summer school.

Native American children were by and large educated in regular classrooms using traditional strategies. Remedial education is provided to Native American children in the same way it is provided to all children. They are part of the mainstream educational program yet are often unable benefit from it.

In districts with smaller numbers of Native American students, there are few special programs. First, the students may not be identified and thus cannot be included in the "head count" that generates special federal funds. Second, limited resources are spread thinly due to the economies of scale that result when a small population is spread out across the district. Aside from generating fewer resources, a smaller population (even if it numbers 300 students) is more likely to remain hidden. Staff question why special services or cultural considerations are important when there are only two or three minority students in a classroom.

In districts with fewer "enrolled" students to generate special funds for programs and services, Indian Education staff may carry caseloads of up to 150 students. Staff responsibilities may include group facilitation, individual tutoring, directing Indian Club, monitoring grades and attendance, referring students to other services, and individual academic, behavior and health counselling.

We found that special programs for Native American students had different goals:

- Academic support (e.g., tutoring, summer reading program).
- Self-esteem development.
- Cultural support and education.
- Attendance improvement and drop-out prevention.

There were differences in the type and scope of services offered in elementary versus secondary schools. Secondary schools focussed on counselling for drop-out prevention and on Native American culture. Elementary services were those available for all struggling students which emphasize remediation and are beginning to include counselling. However, in the elementary schools, there were few programs designed specifically for Native American students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts build programs that incorporate the cultural foundations of Native American children.

Perhaps more than any other ethnic group, Native Americans are separate and apart from the mainstream of life in the Yakima Valley. The Yakima Indian Nation is just that—a sovereign nation that is to a large degree politically and socially separate from the rest of the valley. Many of the Native Americans we spoke with identified strongly with their tribe and reservation. One informant summed up a common feeling about the schools that serve them:

> *"Who do they think they're working with? You're in another country—you're not in the United States anymore. You're in what's called a territory. We're citizens—but of our reservations. We have Indian ID numbers."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Yet, there is tremendous variability among the members of the Yakima nation. Families vary in their: language of preference, religious beliefs, attitudes towards the land, kin-system structure (Red Horse, 1988):

> *"We live as nations, separate nations within a nation. Yet people don't deal with each other that way. There are a lot of misconceptions. And in an urban setting, you have the obstacle of having people from different tribes. And sometimes you have inter-tribal conflict, or a lack of understanding where someone else is coming from. Or they've heard this about these people."*
>
> *Indian Education staff*

Detailed interviews in one community provided a microcosm of the variability in Native American families and values. In more traditional families, the extended family may continue to play a significant role in child rearing—as students get older, they may go and live with other relatives. Although there is not the issue of a distinct language that is still in use among the Yakimas, there are differences in how language is used. As one modern Yakima described:

> *"My daughter's got a friend who's been her best friend for four years, but when I first met her she was bashful. She didn't ask for anything. She wouldn't talk unless you talked to her. Now she knows me and I know her, and she talks to me easily. But you have to get acquainted with them. It takes time. There's a lot that are quieter than her."*
>
> *Native American parent*

What the traditional and the modern Native Americans seem to share are their ties to the land and their reservation. In the words of one modern Native American:

> *"I don't have strong traditional ties, other than that I am a Yakima Indian and this is the Yakima Indian Reservation, and I do feel close ties to the reservation."*

Given the tremendous variability among the Yakimas, schools face a significant challenge in designing programs that build upon Indian children's culture and at the same time respond to different needs and desires of parents with regard to cultural orientation.

The Indian who chooses to participate fully and competitively in Anglo culture may be wary that a focus on the traditional culture prevents Indians from being assertive:

> *"I think you need to have another view. I'm proud of my Indian heritage, but it's not that important to me. Because to me we're living in a non-Indian atmosphere world, and I think we need to learn to cope with it."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Our informants were torn between the need for their children to succeed in today's world and the great losses to their culture that would result from total assimilation. Education was viewed by some as drawing Native Americans away from their culture. Too often, assimilation ends up "taking away" culture rather than adding to it.

There is a fear that Indians who "make it" forget they are Indian. Native American teachers who return to the reservation after college risk total assimilation to the degree that they no longer relate to the needs of Native American children and families:

> *"Have you forgotten that you're Indian and who you're dealing with? Are you so educated that you're above your own people? I don't like that."*
>
> *Native American parent*

There was concern that schools do not recognize that Indian families *do* indeed value education. However, they may not value the type of education that the schools offer their children. Education for Native American children needs to be grounded in their culture and community:

> *"It's not that the Indian people don't want their children to learn; it's that we have priorities, and that's food on the table for our families, caretaking, talking—and we still know about our stories."*
>
> *Native American parent*

> *"They do value education. It's just not always the same idea of what they think education should be."*
>
> *Indian Education staff*

Informants listed some of the important differences in orientation that Native American children bring with them to school and that should inform school practice:

- Inward vs. outward focus.
- Past vs. future orientation.
- Cyclical vs. linear view of time.
- Non-verbal vs. verbal communication.
- Conversation patterns that are measured, rather than hurried and filled with interruptions.
- Comfort with quiet vs. noisy environments.
- Orientation toward listening rather than speaking.

Incorporating Native American cultural foundations into the school structure is a complex challenge: there are no easy answers. Certainly, cooperation between the tribe, parents, and the schools is central.

Districts reach out to Native American students and families in an effort to overcome alienation with the schools.

Native American students and families come to the schools having already experienced many deep losses:

- Loss of language.
- Loss of culture.
- Loss of tradition.
- Loss of family members, to early death or substance abuse.

This makes it even harder for them to fit into a school system that ignores their culture and needs, in which they feel like outsiders and without background knowledge of the system. It is no wonder that Indian parents find it difficult to communicate their needs. As it too often happens, the parents and the school officials face off—the parents physically separate themselves, and the school staff do not extend themselves to offer to help.

At least to get communication going, to break the ice in some districts, the school officials must take the first step. It is their responsibility because they understand the school system and can make it accessible to the parents. It also acknowledges that the parents are in an environment that for many stirs up painful memories and emotions.

Several informants pointed out the importance of the examples set by district and building leaders in creating a bridge between the schools and Native American families. The attitudes of district personnel are key to improving programs for Indian children. And district attitudes are most strongly influenced by district and building administrators, who set the example for others with their actions and values.

Many informants on both sides of the parent-school dyad told us about the success of one district in improving its relationships with Indian families. Activist parents have been effective change agents because the superintendent valued and encouraged their participation. He made active efforts to involve Native American people—parents and tribal leaders—in meaningful rather than token ways. Through his actions and attitudes, he helped to foster an appreciation of the needs of Indian children throughout the district.

Schools aggressively seek out and implement new approaches and tactics to solve the ongoing academic performance problems of Native American children.

Many districts are recognizing that remedial programs have failed Indian children. They continue to lag behind their peers and as children get older, the performance gap between Native Americans and Anglos only widens.

Informants told us about new approaches that are being tried in order to produce better outcomes for Native American children. In one district, a school has implemented a curriculum that uses problem solving and enrichment activities to motivate children and engage them in the learning process.

Grouping Native American children together is another approach that is being used, and according to one informant, they have seen very positive effects:

> *"The classroom changes entirely. Their personalities change. All of a sudden they're outgoing. Kids that won't speak in a non-Indian classroom become gregarious, outspoken. The Indian sense of humor comes out."*
> *Elementary principal*

Many Native Americans in the Yakima Valley would advocate for segregated programs for Native American children. This is not unlike what is happening in some urban settings where special schools are being established for black youth and Indian youth. One informant pointed out that support for segregated programs for Native American youth is a reaction to students' failure in traditional school settings.

Poor attendance of Native American children clearly contributes to school failure. This may be a chicken-and-egg question: Do children fail because they don't come to school, or do they stop coming to school because they are failing? Informants expressed concern about traditional policies for absences. Suspension, detention and other punishments do not appear to be working:

> *"They penalize the kids—put them in detention, because they weren't in school and it wasn't a valid enough excuse."*
> *Native American parent*

Nevertheless, many informants hit hard on the need for schools to implement new and aggressive methods to increase attendance.

In one district, Johnson-O'Malley funds were used to hire two home visitors/attendance monitors to work with students and parents. These staff have been equipped with computers, cellular phones, and a hot-line. Parents are pinning their hopes on these new staff, and are waiting to see what happens when the program is in place.

Schools select and adapt curricula that respond to the needs of Native American students.

There was a strong feeling among Native American informants that many Native American children learn by instructional methods other than those commonly used in the Valley's schools. Several informants pointed out that Native American students don't do things that they see as unimportant, such as homework and book work. They learn by doing. This belief was reinforced by a Native American parent:

> *"Our people here rely on agriculture and Indian fishing. So what we learn is by touching: counting batches of asparagus, counting the fish, weighing, things like that."*

Some Native American parents felt that their children need to learn basic survival skills in order to live in the modern world. Children who have lived on the reservation have never had neighbors and are unaware of community expectations:

> *"The Indian kids need basic survival skills. They are not materialistic. They've never had vacuum cleaners. A lot of them don't know about sewers or putting the garbage out. They're coming from households where extended families live together and everyone has their own specific duty."*
> *Native American parent*

All of this points to a need for schools to develop and utilize curricula that respond to the specific needs of Indian children (e.g., survival skills), and to use instructional methods that prove to be successful with Indian children.

Schools offer relevant cultural programs that are planned in conjunction with Native American parents.

Cultural programs were particularly visible in secondary schools with large numbers of Native American students. These included Yakima language classes and active Indian Clubs. Successful programs have the support and enlistment of parent groups. In several districts, offering the Yakima language was initiated by the Indian Education Parent committee.

Indian clubs varied in their levels of student involvement. In one district, secondary students were embarrassed to attend club meetings. In other districts, the Indian Club had a large and active membership. The high levels of participation seemed to be due to:

- Active parent involvement.
- School-wide interest in the Indian Club.
- Larger percentages of Indian students in the district.

No cultural clubs or ongoing activities seemed to be offered at the elementary level. Focussing these activities at the elementary would help Indian children by boosting self-esteem and by providing an environment that shows appreciation for their culture.

One community presented a model of tribal/school cooperation on providing learning experiences for students that were grounded in Indian culture and at the same time addressed the challenges faced by modern Indians. This district's Johnson-O'Malley Indian Education Committee helped support students attending a national youth conference where young Native American students meet to discuss issues of concern to them—drug and alcohol abuse on the reservation, suicide. The students receive training and background in sovereignty, health, education, self-esteem, communication, teen pregnancy and leadership. The participants develop resolutions that they take back to their tribal officials—one year they requested a drug- and alcohol-free reservation by the year 2000. The participants run the conference themselves with some guidance. Successful Native American role models participate and share their stories. The conference gives students an opportunity to feel solidarity with youth from other tribes, and from a variety of income groups.

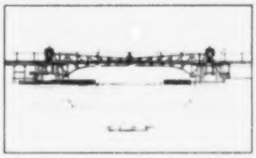
Tribes and schools coordinate their educational services to offer meaningful alternatives to public school programs.

Tribal education services are most effective when they complement the public school program. The Tribal School was seen by many as a dumping ground for students who do not fit into the public school program. The Tribal School was originally conceived as a type of academy for capable Indian students, but there are not enough resources to offer a sufficient range of classes. In practice, the Tribal School is a place for students who have failed in other settings such as boarding schools or public schools.

Underscoring the isolation of the Tribal School, few public school personnel had any knowledge of the services it offers or types of students it serves. In addition, few public school staff could comment on how often their students moved between the Tribal School and the public school.

CHAPTER NINE

PROGRAMS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS



Bilingual students have access to resources to reduce their disadvantage, including trained and sufficient paraprofessionals and bilingual teachers, appropriate materials, and regular assessments of fluency and needs.

THE PROBLEM

Districts in the Yakima Valley serve students with a wide range of English proficiency. There are students from migrant families who have grown up in Spanish-speaking families and whose English skills upon entering kindergarten are minimal. There are migrant students who have grown up in Spanish-speaking families who have mastered social English but may fail in school because they lack academic English skills. Other students who are newly arrived from Mexico or Central American countries have completed advanced academic course work, yet their English language needs may be very similar to those of students who are agricultural migrants who are literate in Spanish. And there are migrants who arrive without any previous schooling and no English.

The districts offer services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students that are in part tailored to their specific student demographics and needs, and that in part reflect the district's resources, staff philosophy of bilingual education, and staff skills and training. For example, some districts in the region serve a very transient population of migrant students, whereas other districts serve larger numbers of migrant families who have settled out.

State law requires that only students with the lowest English-language skills may be out of the mainstream (in ESL) for more than four periods a day. Because school staff have to contend with both serious basic skills deficits as well as language problems, they try to find ways around the law for all bilingual students. In order to compensate, they may assign students to four hours of bilingual classes and two regular classes such as art, physical education, or perhaps math. Then, in the bilingual classes, they can offer basic skills in math and reading.

Like most districts across the country that serve large numbers of Limited English Proficient students, the districts in the region face serious shortages of trained bilingual staff.

All of the districts have difficulty finding and recruiting bilingual teachers and aides. Informants expressed most concern about the shortage of bilingual paraprofessionals who are literate in Spanish and English, because for practical reasons these staff provide most of the direct services. Recruiting bilingual paraprofessionals usually means hiring locally, whereas recruiting professional staff most often requires bringing in someone from outside the region, someone who may or may not decide to stay and make it their home.

Districts are in competition with other local agencies and businesses in hiring bilingual paraprofessionals. The district pay scales for these staff have been low, and because many districts pay these staff a 12-month salary for the school year, their paychecks are even smaller.

Because many schools in the region do not have enough bilingual staff, both bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals are at risk for burnout. They must often assist in the office in administrative duties when there are no bilingual office staff in the building. They spend additional time preparing and planning lessons for a diverse group of students, and must often prepare their own materials. And their work loads are often overwhelming: In one school with 240 bilingual or monolingual students, one bilingual teacher and 2.5 paraprofessionals were responsible for screening, assessing, and tutoring students, as needed. Bilingual teachers frequently serve as social workers, employment counselors, and interpreters for families. As one informant, a project coordinator for a community-based organization, summed up, when bilingual/bicultural staff help students feel that someone understands their culture, it lets students know that "You're okay the way you are."

The shortage of bilingual staff is not limited to aides and teachers, but includes other school staff, such as bus drivers, nurses, clerical staff, and testing staff.

Bilingual paraprofessionals are the major district staff resources for Limited English Proficient students.

Most direct bilingual services in the districts are provided by paraprofessionals. When a bilingual teacher is available, the paraprofessional works closely under his or her supervision. In other cases, the paraprofessional works under a monolingual English-speaking teacher.

Many teachers don't know how to effectively use a paraprofessional or aide. Another way to look at the problem is that they don't know how to approach teaching a non-English-speaking student:

> *"A lot of teachers don't know what to do with these children, so it was entirely up to us aides."*
> *Special education paraprofessional*

Paraprofessionals are often taken for granted in the schools—"They are looked at as a dime a dozen." They are both dispensable and indispensable. They are viewed as a commodity, yet everyone recognizes that the system could not run without them.

It is not unusual, however, to see highly experienced paraprofessionals given tremendous instructional and planning responsibilities. One district uses tutors, a special class of paraprofessional, to independently lead classroom instruction in secondary programs. These tutors have a separate job classification with higher salaries and more responsibilities than aides. The tutors are able to teach classes if lesson plans are made by a certificated teacher, or use their own lesson plans if approved by a teacher. Highly skilled aides and tutors work under the direction of the teacher.

The availability of bilingual aides influences student access to instruction. For example, in one district, ESL students do not have access to the computer lab because it is an elective, and bilingual aides are not provided for electives. In other elective classes that are open to ESL and bilingual students, the teacher tends to give the students a "pass" grade because without an aide, the students cannot understand the instruction. The teachers feel badly that the students haven't been able to follow the class, and they don't like failing them.

Many special skills are required on both sides of the teacher-aide dyad. Districts sometimes provide training for aides and tutors in these skills. However, little training is provided to teachers:

> *"In the best of all worlds, the aide or tutor should be a spinoff, an extension of the teacher, but not all certified teachers can handle that. Districts don't do a real good job training teachers to work with aides. They don't do a lot of coaching and teaching on how a teacher should work with a highly qualified, highly educated aide."*
> *Bilingual tutor*

Districts support these teaching teams by providing planning time for both aides and teachers to meet together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers and paraprofessionals are most effective when they are trained to work together as a team.

In the words of one experienced paraprofessional, a teacher-paraprofessional team can be extremely effective in providing a range of bilingual services if:

- Both know what is most important for and what will help the child.

- The paraprofessional is respected by the teacher and encouraged to play a role in planning activities.

Most paraprofessionals are hired without any training in instruction. The only requirement is that they be bilingual. Districts typically provide the paraprofessionals with training after they are placed in a classroom, but sometimes they work in the classroom for several months without any training:

> *"The district didn't provide any pre-training before I went into the class. Some of the teachers, they demand that you have experience, and if not, you were just one more trainee in the classroom. There was lots of pressure. I felt like I wasn't going to make it. But then I started getting training, and then it was like an open door for me."*
>
> *Bilingual paraprofessional*

Some districts do not pay paraprofessionals for planning time with the teachers. And some teachers won't arrange this unless it is required, because it takes more time. Some teachers resent having to train the paraprofessionals themselves—they might just give the paraprofessional a copy of their lesson plan.

In one school which provides its paraprofessionals with planning and inservice time, the principal evaluates the paraprofessionals using the same checklist used to evaluate teachers to see if they are using strategies taught in the inservice.

Some paraprofessionals feel that the teachers see them as a burden. This depends on the paraprofessional and the teacher. A motivated, energetic paraprofessional can be an asset from day one. A less confident paraprofessional may require considerable assistance from the teacher. When the teacher is already overwhelmed, the relationship is strained:

> *"It would help if the teachers could see that we're there to help and not to be trained. The first day I came in, they asked me, 'Do you have any experience? Have you worked here before?' They just put you down instead of saying 'Look, we have this Spanish kid—how about if you help with him and then you can stay in the class and learn from what I'm doing?' It would make us feel better at least."*
>
> *Bilingual paraprofessional*

The paraprofessional's ability to work effectively with bilingual children is reduced due to too many competing priorities:

> *"There isn't time to sit down and say, 'This is what the schedule looks like,' or 'This is what we need to concentrate on—these skills and these concepts.' The parapros end up having a lot of duties and other extra activities. It really takes away. They need them somewhere else."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

Administrators help the bilingual teams work together more effectively by discussing expectations with teachers and paraprofessionals at the beginning of the year. Administrators who do not understand the process of second-language acquisition can not effectively help plan appropriate services and supports. When district policy is simply to provide paraprofessionals, the result becomes unequal instruction in the classroom.

The bilingual teams are also strengthened when the paraprofessionals are given planning time with the teachers and are required to attend the same inservice sessions as the teachers. This seems only appropriate, because in many classrooms, paraprofessionals are delivering the bulk of education to the migrant and bilingual students. In these situations, students must earn the right to be taught by certificated teachers by catching up with peers in their English skills.

Finally, like all teaching staff, paraprofessionals need time to interact with each other to share strategies and experiences. Currently, these staff members are quite isolated. Because many of these individuals are very busy with other jobs, families, or courses, it would be difficult to schedule this meeting time outside the regular school hours. Since paraprofessionals are hourly employees, meetings would require salary increases.

Districts have recruitment, staff development, and retention policies that support a strong bilingual staff.

All of the districts would benefit from more trained bilingual staff. Individual districts have taken different steps towards hiring or cultivating these individuals.

One district offers a career ladder program that assists bilingual and bicultural paraprofessionals become teachers. Informants spoke highly of these programs, but added that there were not enough spaces, and the waiting lists were long. When these career ladder programs have to triage applicants—accepting those most qualified and with more credits—highly motivated applicants who have the most difficulty earning those initial credits or prerequisites to qualify for admission to the program are least likely to be admitted.

Districts often have to advertise outside the region for bilingual professional staff. Parents and staff cited cases in which staff were hired from the outside who later turned out to have trouble adjusting to the region or the student population. They felt that if experienced bilingual staff and parents from the district had a role in recruiting bilingual staff, better choices could be made.

Districts should ensure that their bilingual staff are adequately trained, for example, by knowing how to teach oral language skills as well are reading. Districts accomplish this by using their grant funds to offer inservice training for teachers and paraprofessionals on bilingual topics. The districts find it very difficult, however, to get them both released at the same time to train them to work as effective teams.

One administrator acknowledged that districts should provide incentives, such as a $1,000 salary bonus, for bilingual teachers to recognize their added duties. In many districts, this would represent only a token compensation for their many large and small extra duties. Anyone who speaks Spanish in the districts is expected to make up for the majority of staff who do not speak Spanish:

> *"So they'll call me to do the—I call it the dirty work—but it's actually the groundwork to build a relationship with the parents."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

For example, the task is not as simple as a monolingual teacher not being able to write a note to a child's parents. It is a case of a teacher not being able to initiate parent involvement. Having a bilingual proxy write the note is a way of abdicating responsibility for parent involvement, or doing parent involvement by proxy.

School attitudes towards the bilingual program are positive.

Successful bilingual education programs benefit from the support of regular education staff. In the ideal district, these staff promote the children's culture and make an extra effort to make bilingual education a part of the "real" educational program.

When teachers regard providing special services as something they "have" to do because the district is receiving federal money, they provide the service but they are not really committed to doing the best job.

Schools implement effective procedures for placing and reassessing Limited English Proficient students.

Procedures for assessing language dominance and English proficiency vary across districts. One district, for example, maintains a list of students eligible for bilingual services based on tests of language dominance in English and Spanish, and tests for placement in ESL. However, test information obtained by paraprofessionals is regarded as inconsistent, and the list is regarded by bilingual staff as "stale, inaccurate, and untimely." As a consequence, many of these students are retested, many times unnecessarily, and other students are never retested because exit criteria for services have not existed.

In another district, it is the regular classroom teacher's responsibility to request language screening for migrant or Native American students. Another district collects extensive data on students prior to placements, to the point of interviewing past teachers about the child.

Staff must deal with the limitations of existing measures. One district had developed its own ESL placement test, which pleased staff but at the same time raised doubts about its predictive validity.

Ideally, districts maintain an accurate, up-to-date list of students who are being served in bilingual programs and their level of proficiency. Informants expressed a need for clear entrance and exit criteria for bilingual services. One district uses the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) to place students in its self-contained bilingual classroom. The district does not have exit criteria to measure proficiency in English and Spanish before moving students out of the bilingual program.

Placement of newly-arrived monolingual students is particularly challenging. The Spanish language proficiency of many Mexican children entering the districts is very low. Some children enter school with

> *"...no language in any language, no education in the native language. They come up here and all of a sudden they're in school. What language do you start with?"*
>
> *District administrator*

There is no clear consensus on the "best" approach to bilingual instruction. Approaches vary by district and school.
We cannot characterize individual districts as adherents to particular philosophies about bilingual instruction. The districts vary in their approaches, and even within districts schools differ:

> *"I haven't really heard of a district philosophy. I have not read the philosophy. I mean, you may have an idea, or you may be thinking, 'This is what it is,' so what happens consequently is that you in kindergarten say, 'Okay, we're going to speak in Spanish.' The next teacher may not have that, so there's no communication. Everybody is doing their own thing."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

More than one staff member told us that they really don't know what their district's philosophy is regarding bilingual education. In one district, each building, even each teacher is doing their own thing. For example, in one district, the non-Spanish-speaking teachers do not seek advice of Spanish-speaking teachers in selecting reading or language materials. Teachers make independent decisions without considering the impact their selection might have on the bilingual children. The needs of the bilingual students are not at the top of the list of considerations. They may not even be on the list at all.

Bilingual programs often seemed to be driven by the reality of local resources (usually bilingual personnel), rather than by the luxury of allegiance to a school of thought and empirical findings. Programs are also shaped by the degree of central office leadership and long-range planning. Below are some examples of elementary and secondary approaches that informants described to us.

Elementary approaches
In general, districts seemed to focus their bilingual resources on their elementary programs, based on their belief in the benefits of early intervention.

Example 1. One district offers transitional bilingual instruction at the elementary level, combining English instruction with content and skills instruction in Spanish. Self-contained bilingual classrooms offer instruction in Spanish and in English to Spanish-speaking children. Once children are proficient in English, they are moved to a regular classroom. Transition to the regular classroom occurs usually in the fall. In the middle school, paraprofessionals are in the classrooms for 4-5 hours a day, and work with groups of one to five students under teacher supervision. Teachers and paraprofessionals have 15-30 minutes of planning time a day.

Example 2. In another school in another district, the elementary bilingual program uses an immersion approach, with an in-class bilingual paraprofessional providing 20 minutes of bilingual instruction per day.

Example 3. Across the way in another district, we found a classroom in which the Spanish-speaking teacher translates all instruction and terms into Spanish for the elementary students. The students don't learn to read in Spanish, but they receive translations in Spanish, allowing them to access the knowledge and concepts the rest of the class are acquiring.

Example 4. In one pilot program, the goal of mainstreaming Spanish-speaking children underlies the bilingual instruction approach. In order to maximize these students' opportunities to interact with their Anglo peers, the bilingual students were regarded as language brokers between the monolingual English-speaking and the Spanish-speaking children. In the past, the school board and local community resisted native-language instruction:

> ***"There is certainly the perception that the community would never support native-language instruction. I think we are finding that that's somewhat of a myth."***
>
> ***Program coordinator***

School administrators and teachers also resisted native language instruction. Most staff do not have Spanish-language skills and do not believe it is important for students to learn, retain, and develop their native-language skills.

In this district, parents are asking for Spanish and Sehafton (the Yakima language) instruction for their English-speaking children. More Hispanic parents are saying that they want their children to maintain Spanish. This is a shift from what informants told us about the earlier immigrants: the parents' first goal was for their children to learn English. Perhaps parents now understand that the schools' model for teaching English has not been additive—rather than adding English to the child's existing Spanish-language skills, the schools have been replacing Spanish with English. So the students remain monolingual, and may lose the skills to communicate with their families:

> ***"One child came up to me who is nine years old and she was so excited that she'd started Spanish instruction. She said, 'I can talk to my mom now.'"***
>
> ***Special education paraprofessional***

This district is believed to be moving towards integrated programs that include Spanish as a Second Language (SSL) instruction for English speakers.

Example 5. This elementary school uses a pull-out model for ESL instruction. The rest of the day, the children are in the regular classroom, which in one classroom is supplemented by some native-language instruction from the teacher. In reading, for example, the teacher translates everything for the Spanish-speaking students:

> ***"I believe that the kids deserve not only language, but also knowledge. If you concentrate on the language too much, you lose out on the knowledge. And even though they become very fluent in English, their knowledge is low. And it takes them forever, it seems, to catch up. When the regular teacher does not speak Spanish, that's hard. The kids have a horrible time. Then they spend more time in the ESL classroom. They struggle. Some of them don't receive any reading instruction whatsoever."***
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

In the ideal situation where a pull-out model is used:

- The ESL teacher and the regular classroom teacher both have ownership of the bilingual students. The regular teacher regards it as his or her job to assure that the bilingual students leave the classroom with the same skills and knowledge as the rest of the class.
- The regular classroom teacher speaks Spanish so that children's learning continues in the regular classroom.
- Teachers make accommodations to ensure that children do not miss important basic skills instruction such as reading (e.g., creative scheduling, reading instruction in the ESL classroom).

A district's approach to bilingual instruction may also be influenced by Anglo parent attitudes. One teacher reported being criticized by Anglo parents for using Spanish in the classroom. The parents felt that the Mexican children are in North America and should be forced to use English. One teacher worked with her students to educate the parents. She got the Anglo children excited about learning Spanish. She also helped some of the Anglo children understand that in fairness to all children, some of the instruction would be in Spanish. Anglo parents became more comfortable with Spanish when they saw that their children were making progress and were not being held back by the language.

We found it interesting how individual teachers across the districts have found ways to "fix" the system. Working fairly independently, some teachers—through fine-tuning programs and applying their skills such as Spanish fluency, resourcefulness, and hard work—improve a very flawed system. Administrative support for these staff in the form of bending the rules is critical in these cases.

Secondary approaches

The trend for secondary bilingual programs is to provide pull-out ESL instruction. Sometimes these ESL classes are scheduled while the rest of the student's classmates are in language arts or social studies, so that the student misses this instruction. In other secondary schools, bilingual students also receive tutorial assistance in content areas, paraprofessional assistance in math and science, and before- and after-school tutoring, if desired.

Secondary students who are assigned to ESL classes have difficulty earning enough credits to graduate with their peers. In some settings, these students actually lose ground because they are not earning credits for their time in ESL.

We found that the recent influx of immigrants has affected the secondary programs most severely. Elementary programs have had more experience with monolingual students entering school. They also seem to be able to accommodate language and skill learning better than the secondary programs, which are more content-oriented than basic-skill-oriented.

Monolingual students who arrive in the middle school, for example, may face the same problems that first-graders experience. State regulations set age limits for middle school that inhibit staff choices for bilingual students who are newly arrived. In one district, teaching staff feel that these students need to be taught to read for comprehension in Spanish before they are transitioned into English instruction. In another district, Total Physical Response (TPR) is used for monolingual students. Because this approach requires a lot of movement, teachers feel it is suitable for students who have never sat at a school desk for seven hours a day. One district places monolingual high school students in "hands-on-type classes like shop until they become a little better with the language." (High school administrator)

Newly arrived students from Mexico "wreak havoc" with secondary school scheduling systems, which are grade-specific and managed by computer:

> *"Still this year we're frantically jockeying to place that seventh-grade boy that comes to us with no education. There's not an immediate place to receive him."*
>
> ***Bilingual tutor***

Ideally, the secondary school would have a real program: one that is in place and does not have to be constantly revamped. According to one informant, the program is always in a state of panic and crisis, and there has been no systematic effort to plan for the new students beyond the heroic efforts of individual teachers. Ideally, the secondary programs would have a flexible schedule:

> *"For example, if this year the influx is in the seventh grade, there's an immense bulge in the seventh grade. Things explode in our faces."*
>
> ***Bilingual tutor***

Because students can only be scheduled around periods such as band, choir, lunch, and grade-level specific classes, the students can fit into only one place: an oversized ESL classroom. This results in constant tinkering with the schedules of ESL students. They may be moved in and out of science classes several times to create a manageable class size for the bilingual staff. The bilingual students ask:

> *"Why don't Anglo students get jerked around? There are more of them than there are of us."*
>
> ***Bilingual tutor***

The counselors try very hard to accommodate the scheduling needs of the students:

> *"It's not that they don't try. The counselors tear their hair out over it, but the system doesn't breathe."*
> *Bilingual tutor*

Parents of children in bilingual programs feel that as a result of the poor quality of instruction in the bilingual program, their children fall further and further behind their peers. The students then start to act out because they are unsuccessful and can't keep up. The school's response is to punish the kids by keeping them in detention and making them stay late after school:

> *"The child is dragged along. Then he may go to the next grade, and the same thing happens, so it almost becomes a way of the school. That's the way it's going to be and the kids have to settle for that. What ultimately happens is that they drop out at an early age—before middle school."*
> *Elementary teacher*

At the secondary level, Spanish-speaking students risk becoming excluded by peers because of their language differences. They may be afraid to use English for fear of being made fun of. Students need a safe place to practice English without fear of ridicule from students or condescension from teachers. For example, teachers sometimes seek out an interpreter rather than take the time to listen to a student who is not very fluent in English. In the ideal school:

- The Spanish-speaking students are owned by entire school staff, not just the bilingual and ESL staff.
- The Spanish-speaking students are expected to attain the same standards as Anglo students.
- Students in ESL programs have access to content instruction and the mainstream educational program.

  At the high school level, there is a shortage of high-level content-area instructors in chemistry and physics, for example, who speak Spanish. Districts face the same shortages in vocational instructors. One district hires aides to accompany students to their vocational classes.
- Staff realize that students in the ESL program need assistance in making friends with students in the mainstream programs.

We found great variety in bilingual programs across the districts, and confusion about the variety of approaches. One result of the variety of bilingual approaches is that programs are not equally accessible across districts in the region. This results in discontinuity in instruction if a student moves.

Schools implement safeguards to prevent secondary bilingual students from becoming isolated and falling behind.

Informants expressed the most concern regarding secondary students in bilingual programs. These are certainly the most challenging groups for high schools to serve—they have the most diverse needs which must be met in a high school environment of already great environmental diversity.

One successful strategy for serving secondary bilingual students is to keep them integrated with their non-bilingual peers. When a school uses a pull-out model to provide ESL training to newly arrived migrant students, for example, these students usually miss courses that they need for credit. The pull-out approach also tends to isolate these students even further from their classmates.

On the other hand, when an ESL teacher uses a consultant model approach to instruction, the ESL teacher can provide assistance to the regular course instructors to help them work with their Limited English Proficient students. This team-teaching approach allows the LEP students to get their instruction in the regular classroom, keep up with their peers in credits, and maintain peer contact:

> *"The ESL teacher would have the freedom to act as a consultant with other teachers in the content areas, to go to the social studies class for one week and to bring those students along, plus other Hispanic students and language-poor students from other cultures in that class. To team teach and model with the regular classroom teachers, because ultimately if we are going to integrate the kids into the classrooms, they have to be able to alter their methodology to reach these kids."*
> *Bilingual teacher*

When Limited English Proficient students are not integrated into their regular classes, it has social and community effects. The students tend to cling together. They may be perceived as an outside group by other students. They are not in situations that require them to practice their English skills. When migrant students, for example, stick together during and after school, other student groups become suspicious of what they are saying in Spanish. Sometimes fights result.

Secondary schools can support their Limited English Proficient students by:

- Providing cross-cultural tutoring.
- Arranging peer learning situations.
- Encouraging student participation in sports and extracurricular activities which offer opportunities to practice English skills.

Schools must take the lead in structuring these activities to socially integrate migrant and Hispanic high school students because the students do not have the social skills to do this for themselves. These students, like many or most high school students, do not know how to make friends. Schools can provide training in social and peer relationships, but more important, integrate them into regular classes and school activities. For example, one high school counselor checks to see that regular teachers are including the migrant students in their classes, and not just sending these students to work with the paraprofessionals:

> *"Administrators need to make it clear that the teachers are responsible for those kids. But it's not like, 'You're responsible, here, take a cut in pay and still do it.' We have someone here who is going to do everything we can, take advantage of this person, cooperate. Administrators giving release time for inservice to get those things started. Approving at least two hours a day for that ESL person to be that roving consultant."*
>
> *Bilingual teacher*

On the other hand, if the monolingual teacher uses other Spanish-speaking children to translate:

> *"The communication suffers because that student who is translating does not have the capability to translate correctly to the point where the monolingual child can understand."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

When a child is used as a translator, he or she is being asked to take on a professional role. He is asked to translate material that is new to him and to instruct another child in unfamiliar material. While peer tutoring is a popular model, it works best in a structured situation where one of the children has proficiency in the content or skill being taught.

Implications of bilingual approaches

District bilingual approaches are strongly influenced by available resources; the approach they choose in turn often influences areas beyond language instruction. For example, secondary ESL pull-out programs can isolate Spanish-speaking students and emphasize divisions between Anglo and Hispanic teens.

Whether instruction is provided in the child's native language can influence basic skills acquisition. When students are not taught in their native language, the result is they do not understand what happens in the classroom, do not follow the content, and fall behind. The first priority is acquisition of a second language. However, when instruction is provided in the native language, the first priority is skills/knowledge acquisition:

> *"Even though we are teaching them in their native language, they're not losing out on their skills, and too, they feel good about themselves."*
>
> *Bilingual teacher*

One teacher described a first-grade bilingual student who was not doing well in the regular classroom. The teachers allowed the student to try out the bilingual classroom. The student decided to remain in the bilingual classroom because he felt more comfortable and could speak Spanish with the other students.

Another informant discussed the detrimental effects of emphasizing mainstreaming bilingual elementary students. Although separate programs may appear discriminatory, parallel programs for the ESL and the "regular" students would allow students to move back and forth:

> ***"When they weren't actually in the ESL class, they could just weave over to the parallel track and then weave back over to ESL."***
>
> ***Bilingual tutor***

Laws and regulations designed to protect students from systemic abuse and discrimination can tie teachers' hands and remove opportunities to make professional judgments. For example, the emotional needs of students may be so great during the period of acclimatization to the Anglo school that students need the controlled environment of the ESL program, even when they may be academically ready to move into the mainstream.

Schools often expect that all students will fit into the mainstream. But some students may have great difficultly, or may never succeed there:

> ***"They struggle and struggle and never achieve success. And just by the nature of our system they end up feeling bad about themselves. Because everything they are and everything they want to be is not part of the ideal mainstream we have defined."***
>
> ***Bilingual tutor***

Schools support their bilingual programs in a variety of ways.

Schools can implement many small or large policies that strengthen their services for bilingual students:

1. Provide bilingual office staff, which reduce the administrative duties of scarce bilingual teaching staff and increase the amount of assistance available to non-English-speaking parents and others in the community.
2. Provide high-quality Spanish-language teaching materials, particularly in reading and the content areas.
3. Provide teachers who are specifically trained in ESL techniques.
4. Provide financial and/or other incentives for bilingual staff to compensate them for their additional responsibilities and prevent burnout.
5. Provide incentives, such as clock hours and credits, for teachers and paraprofessionals to attend inservice training together.
6. Provide opportunities and incentives for all school employees to learn Spanish, and encourage staff to participate.

For example, a bicultural teacher receives requests for help in working with Spanish speaking-students. If the advice involves providing assistance to the students in Spanish, the teachers will not take it:

> ***"I think they are threatened because they feel that it would be a crutch for the kids to have the material translated. Or that they would be passing on a problem to the next teacher who doesn't speak Spanish."***
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

Some bilingual teachers view translation as a crutch rather than as a way to help children access knowledge and skills. It appears preferable to them for the students to miss out on information rather than use some Spanish language assistance.

- Provide strong counselling at the secondary level to make students understand the school's expectations and the reasons for them—that they must learn English to compete in the real world after graduation.
- Concentrate paraprofessional assistance in the high school on math and science, rather than home economics and typing.
- Maintain high expectations for non-English speaking students—and not assume they will do poorly and allow lower standards and programs.
- Provide *all* communication to migrant and bilingual parents in both English and Spanish.
- Provide bilingual teachers with Spanish-language texts and materials.
- Include bilingual staff on textbook adoption committees.

Efforts to change bilingual programs must have staff support.

District-level leadership: All school staff must be invested in changes. A top-down approach that dictates what each building should do will not work. On the other hand, leaving each building to fend for itself won't work either. Building staff and principals need district level leadership and planning to support their efforts. District level vision and long-range planning are created through a consensus building process with central office leadership.

Understanding second-language development: Teachers must understand how children acquire a second language and the importance of being proficient in the academic as well as social language skills:

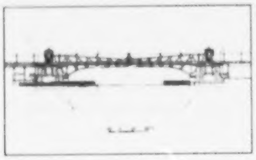
> *"Children will acquire social fluency quickly, perhaps in two or three years. And if you're not trained in second-language acquisition, you think, 'Aha, this person is understanding English.' But it takes seven to 10 years to become fluent in the academic English that is used in the classroom."*
>
> *Program coordinator*

Understanding of students' cultural conflicts: Staff need to develop empathy for their migrant and bilingual students in order to be effective:

> *"The message that our students get is that there is something wrong with speaking Spanish. 'So there must be something wrong with my family and me.' They are forced to choose between the culture at home and the culture at school, and they can't see that they can be both."*
>
> *Program coordinator*

CHAPTER TEN

PROGRAMS FOR MIGRANT STUDENTS



Migrant students have access to specialized programs and services.

THE PROBLEM

Migrant students don't fit many of the assumptions upon which schools have structured their services, beginning with the school year calendar and daily schedule. The language, cultural, economic, and social diversity of migrant students demands that schools offer specialized services and adapt traditional services to accommodate migrant student needs.

Schools have to revise their student expectations based on the realities of migrant student lives.

Migrant students who enter the Yakima area districts have characteristics that challenge and often conflict with the assumptions schools make about students. First, there is students' widely varying levels of English proficiency which require a range of individualized ESL and bilingual services, and which profoundly affect their ability to benefit from instructional programs.

In addition, migrant students' family responsibilities require that schools adjust or revise their traditional expectations for students. Regular attendance is assumed to be a prerequisite for school success, and schools are not set up to deal with intermittent attendance. Schools have been accustomed to working with students who come with a future orientation, whereas many migrant students of necessity are accustomed to living for today and dealing with the here and now. Schools regard students as children, whereas many migrant students already have managed adult responsibilities for many years. Students who are regarded as men at home in their families and in the fields are expected to behave like boys in the classroom.

The term "migrant" is defined so that students who need services because of their migrant life style receive services.

The term "migrant" is one that needs to be qualified. It is a powerful term because it links students to services. It refers to the recent influx of migrant students moving to the U.S. from Mexico; it also refers to students who are moving *within* the U.S. According to informants, there is a big difference between newly arrived students from Mexico and South and Central America and in-state or in-country migrants. Some informants believe that the newly arrived migrants who don't speak English, or who may have already completed high school in Mexico are very motivated:

> *"These are the kind of kids that can be helped the most. These kids that came from Mexico have had it bad and they believe in the American dream. They say, 'Hey, I'm going to take advantage of this, baby."'*
> *Project coordinator, community-based organization*

Native American students comprise a small group of migrants, as well. These youth follow seasonal fish runs and to a limited extent work in agriculture.

Each of these migrant groups has a range of educational needs. Some needs overlap, and some are very different.

One informant estimated that 15 to 20 percent of migrant students "work the system"—that is, their families move them for a short period of time to keep them eligible for migrant services such as health insurance. Some of these students may not even speak Spanish, but they have the same needs in terms of having to work and dealing with basic survival issues as the classic Status I migrant students who do move from state to state to follow the harvests.

The term "migrant" most often means a student who is migrant eligible according to the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS). In the districts, MSRTS staff are funded to identify and certify migrant students. These staff, most often home visitors, use school records to enroll students. The home visitors review school registration forms to see if a parent has moved into the district to seek agricultural work, or if the family surname is Spanish. Through these checks, staff may identify up to 99 percent of migrant students in the district. Other students are referred to migrant education staff by teachers.

Migrant education staff are often overwhelmed with the task of certifying students at the beginning of the school year. In one district, two staff members are responsible for certifying about 3,000 migrant students. Staff must work evenings and weekends to get the registration completed. The MSRTS wants registration information within 14-15 days of the school start.

In addition to registration, home visitors also take on various responsibilities for migrant families. They may help families fill out free lunch forms, transport students who miss the bus, follow up on physical exams when the child needs additional health care, get prescriptions filled for the child, or drive the child to a medical appointment.

Some informants expressed frustration with MSRTS. Problems they cited included:

- Information is not comprehensible or meaningful.
- School staff don't know how to use the information.
- Receiving districts don't get credit information from sending districts before students actually arrive at the school, or this information is not provided in hard copy, or by computer or modem:

> *"They did all of this inservice to get school districts to encode all of the information about these kids when they left the school district. What happened? Kids would show up in another district; the MSRTS form would show up three weeks later. Did anyone care? No. What good could that possibly be? A teacher's going to wait for three weeks for information like that? In that time, a teacher is going to be working with the child. She'll do her own testing, will know ten times more than what's on the MSRTS form by the time the form shows up. If it showed up three days after the child did, the teacher would probably still be ahead of it."*
>
> *Migrant education staff*

The consequence of student forms arriving two or three weeks after a migrant student arrives is that the student is then retested for appropriate placement—a problem MSRTS was designed to solve. Problems also arise when receiving teachers are unaware of a student's special education needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools provide classroom supports for migrant students that match students' developmental needs.

The state's Migrant Education Program funds staff in the districts to serve qualified students who need special tutoring, are behind in grade level, or do not have requisite language or study skills. Migrant education staff are assigned by districts to identify and certify as eligible students who are migrant, instruct the students and families about migrant health insurance, and provide students with annual physicals, tutoring, content area interpretation, and ESL instruction. Migrant education monies basically supplement bilingual programs in many districts, serving students with the greatest needs, usually only current migrants and not settled-out migrants.

Informants seemed to feel that the state of services for migrant *elementary* students is satisfactory. At the elementary level, students can be more easily pulled out for tutoring in small groups, either within the classroom or in a resource room. Several districts concentrate their bilingual resources at the elementary level, including bilingual teachers, tutors, and materials.

For a number of reasons, migrant *secondary* students are more difficult to serve. First, there is the fact of their working during the school day. Second, their diversity in language and social skills often isolates them from their peers at a time when peer acceptance is most important. Informants described successful migrant students as those who:

- Are newly arrived in the U.S. and have aspirations to change their lives. Students who have been migrant throughout their childhood often already think of it as a way of life with no way out.
- Learn English quickly.
- Use English outside the classroom with peers.
- Join in activities such as sports and clubs with other students.
- Have parents who take ESL lessons.

Perhaps most important is the isolation that migrant secondary students experience. They often enter school late in the school year, missing out on enrollments for sports and clubs. Their low economic status and their work schedules result in their not becoming part of a peer group. School counselors are often not trained or motivated to encourage the students to become independent, make friends, and make future plans. Migrant high school students may lose out on credits due to poor credit accrual and transfer procedures. They don't receive credit for English classes—only elective credits which don't count for graduation. They often lack someone to advocate at the school for their needs. School attendance policies are written for students who are not motivated and who skip school—whereas migrant students want to finish school but *must* work.

Schools reflect an understanding of migrant student needs by:

- Educating parents about services for which they are eligible, even if they are not U.S. citizens.
- Training migrant parents, beginning when their children are in elementary school, to advocate for their children.
- Educating parents about the benefits in language and social skills from their child's participation in after-school activities such as sports.
- Assuring that migrant students receive integrated services for which they are eligible—not just migrant services, which are limited:

> *"If the regular school system has tried to do something themselves and has failed to do it, and then they look to migrant staff to help them out, that's one thing. But if they've taken the migrant-funded people without bothering to do anything themselves, then I would have a problem with that."*
> *Migrant education teacher*

- Hiring bilingual office staff to prevent migrant classroom staff from being used for administrative duties, when migrant staff are already faced with overwhelming student and family needs:

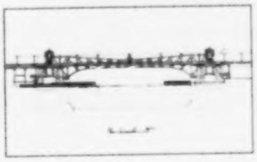
> *"There's too many people. I sometimes get frustrated because there's only so much we can do in our job to help. I've had people come to my house, I've read letters for them, written letters for them, because that's not part of my job, but I want to help them. We try to help them as much as we can."*
> *Migrant education staff*

- Designing attendance policies that acknowledge that some students must work, and that provide flexibility such as partial credit.
- Hiring strong advocates for migrant secondary students who coordinate needed services and offer academic counselling:

> *"As the students begin to function more and more in English, I ask them, 'Have you checked with the counselor first? You go see the counselor first. Then come and see me.' So I am empowering the students how to access the services here. I take a look at every academic schedule of every kid who is migrant or bilingual to be sure that they get into the right classes."*
> *Migrant/bilingual high school counselor*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS



Preschool and early intervention resources are available for all families.

THE PROBLEM

Early intervention and preschool services are almost unanimously supported by the field and by informants as a cost-effective strategy to prevent school failure and to even out the playing field for children from low-income and at-risk backgrounds. Preschool is regarded with great promise by advocates in the districts who see clearly the overwhelming problems that students and families face. These advocates are painfully aware that what they can do in the later years will only make a dent, and that preschool offers the best chance for mitigating the immense problems that some children bring to school:

> ***"They don't come in ready to learn. We really have to prepare children. If the kids are going to get the optimal opportunity to progress in this life, because by golly kids are not born all the same—this equal opportunity is hogwash. Some kids have silver spoons, and some kids have no spoons at all. If we're going to give kids the opportunity to learn, then we need to prepare them to learn. And they're still not going to be equal. Kids that start in last place—they're out of the race."***
>
> ***District administrator***

Districts in the study face two issues regarding preschool services. The first is how they choose to qualify students for preschool developmentally handicapped services. The second is how they choose to allocate resources to make preschool available to all children who could benefit. The major complaint was that there were not enough spaces to serve the children who are in need of the programs:

> ***"I've been told that people have put their kids on waiting lists and can barely get in. We do have quite a few kids who can't get in. So they get to school and haven't really had the same opportunities. There's a big difference."***
>
> ***Indian Education staff***

RECOMMENDATIONS

Preschool and early intervention programs yield many benefits for migrant and Native American children and families.

Informants almost universally praised the districts' and the tribal Head Start and preschool programs. Preschool programs were acknowledged to accomplish several goals:

- Attempt to equalize opportunities for many children who start out poorly in the districts.
- Increase language skills of migrant and Native American students.
- Provide parents with training and child care.
- Provide home-based opportunities for parenting training and family interventions.
- Provide parents and children with a positive school experience early on in their lives.
- Offer parents opportunities to advocate for their child and develop these skills in school environments that are less complex and intimidating than regular elementary and secondary settings.

Informants noted that increased Head Start spaces are especially needed in communities without a year-round migrant community. Head Start programs are so popular in some communities that parents actually do the recruiting for these programs.

Preschool programs are believed to help develop verbal skills in shy and reticent Native American children:

> *"I think the difference with our Indian Head Start kids, we get them talking. When they come to us, they're really quiet and intimidated and scared of speaking out."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Districts' eligibility criteria for preschool handicapped services reflect their philosophy of early intervention.

Preschool special education assessment:
The Washington Administrative Code specifies a testing process for preschool special education eligibility. However, due to a variety of factors--the validity and reliability of assessment instruments, the young age of the children being tested, the influence of cultural and environmental factors on development--professional judgement plays an imperfect role in determining who will be placed in special education preschool programs.

Districts vary in how they apply eligibility criteria in identifying children for preschool handicapped programs. This variation is most likely explained by judgement in the special education assessment process. Children whose delays are attributed to cultural or environmental factors may or may not be selected for preschool special education programs based on the district's policies, procedures and program philosophy.

One district's application of professional judgement results in a large preschool special education population. The district is very careful in assuring that only truly handicapped children are served in special education programs from first grade on. But the district will include children in its preschool handicapped programs who may not later qualify for these services. The district's intent is to provide these children with a strong readiness foundation for school. One of the benefits of this approach has been to drastically reduce the need for referrals to special education once children reach school age.

At the other end of the spectrum, another district qualifies children for preschool special education services only if the child will clearly be eligible for special education once the child reaches school age. However, the state's rich reimbursement rate seems to increase the incentive for most districts to qualify all children who meet eligibility criteria and who will benefit form services. It is puzzling that districts purporting to desperately need preschool programs will turn down special education funds to support their language-poor preschoolers who meet the eligibility criteria.

Staff training needs: Along with a shortage of programs, informants described a need for individuals trained in early childhood education. One Head Start director felt that the district did not understand Head Start's focus on family support and social skills, and cited a need for staff training in district-Head Start collaboration and early childhood.

Cultural concerns: The tribal Head Start program introduces children to traditional language and customs, and conducts cultural and inservice exchanges with EPIC (Enterprise for Progress in the Community) migrant Head Start. In the districts, some bilingual staff are employed in the preschool handicapped programs.

Although informants described attempts to acknowledge children's cultures in preschool programs, some informants described attempts to replace children's home environments and reshape the children and their parents into a white, middle-class mold.

Parent involvement: Many parents who become involved in the schools begin their participation when their child is in Head Start. Parents in Head Start often receive training in:

- Skills and behaviors for working with school staff. Parents can practice and encourage each other in a safe environment with their peers.
- Parent roles and skills, child development, and other supports.
- Importance of child's regular school attendance.

Head Start parents also have opportunities to participate directly in the classrooms, creating an immediacy that draws some parents in. This classroom involvement, however, requires language accommodations such as bilingual aides or teachers.

Transition from preschool: There were some concerns about communication between the preschool and the public schools. The ideal situation would be to have the sending agency and receiving agency plan together on the child's program and transfer. Some districts have difficulty coordinating with Head Start because they disagree about which assessment instruments to use, test outcomes and appropriate placements.

Informants suggested that successful transition can be aided through:

- Parent orientation to the kindergarten program, such as a meeting with the new principal and a video shown to parents at the preschool program. Some districts invite preschoolers to visit their prospective kindergarten programs.
- Discussions and observations between preschool and kindergarten staff, so that preschool staff can help children develop the behaviors required in kindergarten.

Transportation: Many Head Start programs do not provide transportation. This is a serious barrier for children of working parents. In some Head Start programs, attendance drops at the end of the month when families are running out of money and cannot afford the gas to get their children to the program.

SUPPORTS FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS

The school offers supports for struggling students.

THE PROBLEM

Hispanic and Native American students experience a disproportionate number of risk factors that result in poor school performance. Some of these risk factors call for educational interventions and support, and other factors require social supports the child needs to succeed in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The schools prepare staff to help low-performing students.

In districts where a large number of students are disadvantaged by environmental factors, teachers and other school staff must have strong skills in improving and remediating student performance. We found that districts in the region do this by providing inservice on educational interventions designed and found to be effective with students with special needs. To increase motivation and relevance, districts also offer inservice on how to integrate information about the students' culture and local history into the regular curriculum. Inservice topics may include:

- Cooperative Learning.
- Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP).
- Peer support strategies for staff (e.g., strategies for bilingual and monolingual staff to work together).
- Peer tutoring strategies for students.
- Curricular integration (e.g., integrating writing into other subject areas).
- Social studies curriculum built around the Yakima Valley.

The schools offer help for all students who are doing poorly or failing courses.

Given the diversity of their student populations, the schools strive to offer a variety of options for students who need help in their academic courses. District options include:

- Chapter 1.
- Learning Assistance Program (LAP).
- Bilingual program.
- Johnson-O'Malley tutor.
- Bilingual tutor.
- Peer tutor.
- After-school bilingual tutors (with bussing provided).
- Tutors during elective time.
- ESL and learning in Spanish for students with little or no prior formal schooling.

Interdisciplinary teams may be formed to discuss programs and student needs, and to make decisions about individual student needs and appropriate placements or resources.

Districts may also use retention, keeping a student from going on to the next grade with his or her peers, as a means of assisting a student who cannot keep up with classmates. Some districts limit this option to one time per child. Ideally, when a child is retained, extra assistance should be provided. Parents are often unaware that the district is not offering extra help to the child who has been held back.

Other parents expressed concerns that the schools pass their Native American children along because teachers are tired and frustrated with them. Parents suspect that their children do not have skills comparable to students in other districts. But the parents don't know how to evaluate this situation for themselves.

Districts can use sports as an incentive to student achievement. Some programs offer tutorials associated with sports. These programs don't exclude students from sports because of student grades. This results in a diverse mix of students. Some districts find ways to pay for shoes and equipment for students whose parents are unable to pay. Students who participate in these sports programs must attend tutorials in order to attend sports practice. If students' grades fall below a certain level, they can't compete in games, but they can continue to go to practice. This system provides tremendous motivation for students to improve their grades. It turns sports into a very motivating aspect of school, rather than an elite, separate system. Ideally, in this type of program, the tutors and the students' teachers are in close communication regarding the student's requirements and progress.

Schools implement long-term interventions to support at-risk students.

Behavioral, environmental, and academic risk factors are not always amenable to discrete, school-focussed interventions. One district has initiated a series of social work case-management services for students with a variety of risk factors, ranging from school absences, neglect, migrancy, tardiness and delays, to poverty and family dysfunction. The goal of the services is to remove barriers to children's educational progress. Barriers may be related to the child's home, health, or the school program. Although the services are directed to improving school success, the staff recognize that it is unrealistic and unfair to evaluate the program's success based on student achievement, given the complexity and severity of need of many children in poverty.

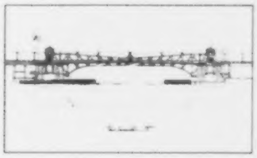
This program provides a conduit for information between the families and the schools. It helps schools avoid making decisions about the child without having all the facts:

> *"A lot of people are used to referring to Child Protective Services (CPS), and I almost feel it's like swallowing a minnow with a shark—it's overkill. So we're able to go in and get some good information, bring it back, and say, 'Now that you've got more information, what type of decision do you want to make?'"*
>
> *Program director*

Schools have few alternatives when faced with children and families in crisis. Programs that provide long-term access to comprehensive services increase the odds that students with risk factors will be able to remain and succeed in school.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS



Special education programs safeguard that children are selected on the basis of need versus ethnicity, and provide appropriate services that respond to important cultural and linguistic differences.

THE PROBLEM

Because of the many environmental factors which delay children's achievement in areas that are important for school success, a disproportionate number of Native American and Hispanic children already stand out as needing special help when they first arrive at school. Special education staff are charged with the difficult task of discriminating children who are truly handicapped from those whose low achievement is a result of their social environment rather than a physical or mental handicap. Despite numerous safeguards, many districts find that children of color are overrepresented in special education.

For obvious handicaps—blindness, moderate to severe mental retardation, autism—accurately determining the presence of a disability is not difficult. Identifying children in the "fuzzy" special education categories such as learning disabilities, behavior disorders, and mild mental retardation presents the greatest challenge. Children who are not native English speakers or who come from culturally different backgrounds frequently meet the eligibility criteria for these softer categories when standardized test scores are the only criteria used for determining a disability. California U.S. District Court cases in the 1970s prohibiting schools from using IQ scores alone to make special education eligibility determinations because these tests discriminate against children of color (Diana v. State Board of Education; Larry P. v. Riles) had an influence on federal and state policies.

Ultimately, the schools' task is to make a good match between children with extreme educational needs and available programs. Schools sort children among compensatory education programs such as Chapter 1, the Learning Assistance Program, bilingual education, migrant education, Indian education, and special education.

The most closely guarded of all of these programs is special education. Schools in the Yakima Valley, like schools around the country, struggle with making decisions about who should receive special education services. Special education placement can stigmatize children and limit access to the mainstream of education. Furthermore, special education is a finite resource, particularly with regard to the softer categories. Washington, like other states, places a lid on the number of learning disabled students a district can serve. The result is that special education becomes the service of last resort in areas with large numbers of low achievers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools use a variety of safeguards to protect children from inappropriate placement in special education. A heavy reliance on test scores is replaced with professional judgment.

Given the low achievement levels of the students in the region, teachers search for answers to their students' problems:

> *"The kids are coming in so low. And the teachers feel like, 'I wasn't successful with this kid. He needs something I can't give—maybe special education can.' The pressure [to refer to special education] is there."*
> *Administrator, special education*

A history of over-referral and inappropriate placements has led to a closed door policy for special education in most districts. A variety of "gatekeepers" are used. In one setting, the school psychologist was referred to as "the brakes." The onus is placed on teachers to show that the child has failed and that alternative approaches have not helped. This is not unique to the Yakima Valley: teachers around the nation are being asked to take more responsibility for the lowest-performing children in their classrooms. In Yakima, the problem is intensified, however, because of the severity of achievement delays.

It is important to note that several informants indicated that the careful attention to detail in the special education assessment process that we observed was not driven by the need to protect ethnic minorities. Rather, the enforcement of state regulations in the region is "by the book," and schools must be very careful in order to avoid audit exceptions.

Standardized tests and assessments do not work. The assessment protocols and instruments for determining special education eligibility do not work well in certain multicultural settings. Many are prescribed by the Washington Administrative Code but are simply not useful when testing children who do not speak English or who come from different cultures. Informants were frustrated, even angry, with the lack of adequate testing devices. They told us that existing tests are:

- Not always available in Spanish. Using translated versions, which does occur, invalidates the test results.
- Standardized on nonequivalent populations, resulting in inaccurate comparisons and conclusions.
- Not useful in predicting future school success.

Spanish-speaking instructional assistants are used as interpreters for standardized tests, which, by definition, compromises the assessment results. These staff are not trained in carefully standardized test procedures. They do not have the vocabulary to explain the process or interpret results. The outcome is inaccurate test administration and results, as well as embarrassment for families and instructional assistants.

The severe shortage of Spanish-speaking professional staff has forced some districts to rely upon paraprofessionals. Some districts have been very successful in training paraprofessionals to serve effectively as interpreters and partners in the assessment process. To achieve these results, extensive training and experience is required.

Special education placement is relative.

> ***"You have to understand that 70 percent of our kids, if they went to school in Bellevue (a wealthy suburb of Seattle), would be in special education."***
>
> ***Special education administrator***

Districts in the region go to great lengths to distinguish children whose low school performance is related to environmental factors from children whose performance stems from organic or other factors. Test scores do not help in making these fine distinctions. In order to sift out kids who are "really" handicapped from those whose achievement is delayed through lack of experience and exposure to language, you need to look at the child in a regular classroom for a long period of time.

In most of these districts, the primary eligibility test is:

> ***"Can this child succeed in this school? It's a very relative question."***
>
> ***Special education administrator***

So the true test of need for special education is whether or not a student fails a regular classroom placement, even with the best of teachers or with many different interventions, prior to consideration for special education.

Underscoring the relativity of special education placement decisions is the low census of learning-disabled students in some districts. Two districts had to start encouraging the bilingual teachers to refer to special education because their learning disabled populations were well below the state lid and they had "room." Undersubscription can result from strict policies that prevent placing children in special education if professional judgment shows that the child's low achievement is caused by environmental factors. These policies are designed to assure that special education does not become a dumping ground for children of color.

The region is different from the rest of the state only in matter of degree. Special education, even with sophisticated test batteries, usually ends up taking the lowest children in each classroom. In the Yakima Valley, placing the lowest performing children in special education leaves a group of students in the hands of the regular classroom teacher who in other districts would also be served through special education.

Safeguards are built in throughout the special education assessment process.

Sophisticated systems of checks and balances have been established in many of the region's districts that prevent inappropriate placements of Native American and Hispanic children in special education. A typical system might include the following steps:

1. Student identified in classroom.
2. Pre-referral to Child Study Team is made.
3. For children with limited English proficiency, a bilingual consultant assigned to determine if student is receiving appropriate services.The bilingual consultant prescribes instructional intervention for at least one month. If child shows progress, no special education referral is made. If child does not show progress, special education referral made or new intervention implemented.
4. If special education referral is made, social worker does case history of family, child, linguistic, cultural and environmental factors.
5. Multidisciplinary team reviews information to make decision. For children with limited English proficiency, multidisciplinary team includes bilingual staff.

Well-planned safeguards are built into the process. These might include:

Teacher Responsibility: Classroom teacher must document the interventions that have been tried and the outcomes of each to demonstrate that the child is in need of special education. Staff are required to justify referrals and make a strong case that special education placement is the only alternative.

Pre-Referral Strategies: When a teacher identifies a child who may be in need of special education services, most districts told us that they intervene in the regular classroom first. Interventions may be prescribed by a multidisciplinary team or a school psychologist. One district tries the intervention for at least a month. If the child makes progress, no special education referral is made. Counselling sessions may be used with high school students.

Use of Personnel: Districts build in safeguards by tailoring the multidisciplinary team to meet the unique challenges of assessing bilingual children for special education. Examples of this approach include:

- Assigning a bilingual special education teacher to the multidisciplinary team.
- Increasing the size of the multidisciplinary team from three or four people to 10 or 12 people.
- Using a bilingual, building-based psychologist in the dual role of counselor and special education gatekeeper.

Professional Judgment: Professional staff rely heavily on a variety of data that are not derived from standardized tests in order to rule out the effects of environment and culture on special education determinations. Particularly if language scores are low, special education staff look for evidence of a handicapping condition. Their assessment may look at such factors as:

- Days of school missed.
- Trauma in the family.
- Cultural differences.
- Primary language in the home.
- Behavior/performance of siblings.

- Family and community expectations
- How the child functions in the home.

Layering Programs: In most districts, a child must "fall out" of another compensatory program before he or she is even considered for special education. Layers of other programs—Chapter 1, Learning Assistance Program—are created to protect special education from oversubscription. The role of the multidisciplinary team is to determine if special education can do something that is not being done elsewhere.

Many times these safeguards are not system-wide; implementation is at the discretion of each building within a given district. The effectiveness of the district's efforts to prevent inappropriate special education placements is determined by widespread use of the safeguard as well as the quality of the implementation of the safeguard. For example, having 10 people on the multidisciplinary team is not an effective safeguard unless the people on the team are skilled at making good judgments about which children really require and will benefit from special education.

We were told by most informants that other factors—besides the safeguards described above—are partly responsible for assuring that special education does not become a dumping ground for minority children. First, the sheer numbers of Native American and Hispanic children in most districts prevent wholesale assignment to special education. If all the minority children who needed extra help were assigned to special education, the regular classrooms could be nearly empty. Second, informants told us that the layers of other special programs are successful in supporting struggling students, and eliminate the need for special education placements in all but the most severe cases.

Many staff felt that the safeguards can work against students who need special education services and delay or even bar access to appropriate services:

> ***"Sometimes you have a kid you know needs special ed and it takes you all year long, maybe till next year. They also have a thing where you have to be in a certain grade before you can even qualify to get special services. From kindergarten you can't unless you're definitely hanging from the lights."***
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

Differential placement in special education. In most districts, we were told that the safeguards are most effective for Hispanic children. It was generally agreed that there is a slightly higher rate of placement for Native American students compared to Hispanic students. Suggested reasons for the discrepancy included:

- Native American students are at higher risk for health impairments, hearing impairments, and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).
- There are more school resources available outside special education for Hispanic children, such as migrant and bilingual programs, that can provide some of the same services.

Schools involve parents in making decisions about special education assessment, placement and services.

Federal and state laws require that schools involve parents in decisions about their children, particularly with regard to special education. Informants said that it was most effective to work on a one-to-one basis with the parents of children in special education. A commitment to working with parents on a one-to-one basis is reflected in:

- Assessments for preschool children are conducted in the home.
- IEP meetings are conducted in the home, particularly for preschool children.
- School staff, including teachers, specialists, and administrators, make home visits for special education students.

Obtaining parent permission for assessment and subsequently for placement in special education is a time-consuming and difficult task for many of the districts in the region. We were told often that parents of Native American and Hispanic children are difficult to reach in order to arrange meetings. Many do not have phones.

The process of qualifying a child for special education takes a long time because of these barriers.

Districts use a variety of approaches to obtain the required parent sign-off for special education testing and placement. Visiting the child's home was the most successful strategy. One district estimated that about 80 percent of parent approvals for IEPs are obtained at the child's home. In another district, professional staff visits to children's homes to obtain parent consent for testing and IEPs were a matter of policy.

Other districts rely on home visitors if parents will not or cannot attend meetings at school. These visits are usually made to obtain the parents' signature only, and the parent is referred to the school with questions:

> ***"So I just take the IEP to their home. I just tell them, 'You didn't show up for your meeting. Sign here and there. If you have more questions, here's the number'—or, 'The school [already] has your kid enrolled, and there is a person there that has the information you need.'"***
>
> ***Home visitor, Migrant Program***

For parents who do not speak English, interpreters are provided. One district took the approach of using a single Spanish-speaking professional staff member as the primary contact for parents in order to establish trust and a comfort level for parents.

Special education programs offer appropriate services for minority students.

A number of informants expressed concern about the availability of special education services that are appropriate for bilingual children. For children who have a handicapping condition and who speak Spanish, placement in a program where no Spanish is spoken may be a step backwards.

Adequate district and building resources and "human flexibility" are part of the successful equation for adequate bilingual special education programs. Clearly, the greatest impediment to offering instruction in Spanish to special education children is the lack of staff. The problem of finding Spanish-speaking professional staff is intensified when the requirement for special education endorsement is added. Staff deficits are frequently mitigated by the creative use of existing Spanish-speaking staff and paraprofessionals.

Schools and community agencies work together to make good decisions about placement and services.

Informants told us of many instances where community agencies and schools worked together to provide services to "shared" clients. Particularly for conditions that require physician involvement to diagnose a handicap and design school services, community agencies (e.g., health clinics, mental health agencies) play an important role. For example, several community clinics worked closely with schools to identify children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). In other cases, schools provide linkage to supports that children need in order to succeed in school, such as glasses or hearing aids.

Interagency activity was particularly valuable between early childhood programs and school district special education services. Program continuity, parent involvement and the transition to kindergarten are enhanced through sharing resources and frequent communication. In one case, a Head Start program changed its special education assessment process in order to be compatible with the process used by districts that will be receiving their students. However, it is difficult to achieve compatibility in assessment procedures and the concomitant savings because preschool assessment protocols vary across districts in the region. One result of lack of communication about assessment and expectations in special education is that early childhood providers are seen by school district personnel as "too anxious" to refer to special education.

School districts implement policies regarding identification and placement for children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAS/FAE).

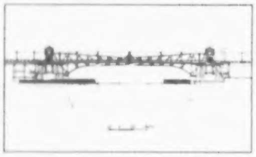
While most people agree that alcohol and drug abuse during pregnancy are having an effect on children, there is disagreement and confusion about how schools should respond. Many parents and advocates support the creation of a separate category for FAS/FAE in special education. However, many school staff feel very strongly that FAS/FAE is a medical diagnosis that sheds little light on educational practice and services:

> ***"Better to qualify kids for special education according to the criteria they fit, and then design the program that they need, rather than again diluting special ed to design a program for autistic kids, a program for FAE kids, a program for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder kids. There's no way special ed can do it."***
>
> ***Special education administrator***

Some staff look upon FAS/FAE as just one among many sources of mental retardation and educational delay that does not require unique teaching methods or a special label. Creating a separate FAS/FAE category could result in over-referral of Native American children to special education. The Fetal Alcohol Effect label could be particularly damaging since it presents no clear medical symptoms. Diagnosis is based on assumptions about the mother's drinking habits during pregnancy and is a "best guess" about the cause of a child's educational delay. We found concern that confusion and misinformation among teachers about FAS/FAE could work against Native American children. Inservice education that gives up-to-date information about FAS/FAE and their impact on learning and implications for teaching is needed.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EQUAL ACCESS TO PROGRAMS



Educational opportunities and programs are available to all students on an equal basis.

THE PROBLEM

At the heart of educational equity is the assurance that no student will be denied access to programs or benefits offered by the school. Certainly the most blatant practices that deny students access to programs and schools are no longer allowed by state and federal laws and community standards. However, certain policies and procedures can create more subtle and even unintentional barriers to equal access for minority students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools build in systemic safeguards to assure that all students have equal opportunities to enjoy the same school benefits.

Schools that regard equity as a foremost issue will carefully examine their policies and procedures to assure that no student is denied access to programs and services. One of the most obvious examples of how schools avoid denying equal access is through the use of heterogeneous student groupings rather than ability groupings in elementary schools. Grouping students according to ability effectively segregates children along social, economic, and racial lines. Heterogeneous grouping, which places students of widely varying abilities together in the same classroom, is a systemic safeguard that prevents segregation and assures that all children have equal access to the opportunity to learn all material that is taught.

For example, in one elementary school students are assigned to classrooms by computer in order to assure a heterogeneous mix. Only five parent requests for transfer are allowed in each classroom.

All high school students have access to college-bound programs, and alternative schools offer high-quality courses with good outcomes.

High schools across the country are grappling with the issue of student "tracking." High school administrators are beginning to question the efficacy of offering one set of programs with resources concentrated on the "college-bound" student and another set for the non-college-bound student which are less well-planned and supported:

> ***"We do have a great program for the college-bound student. But we don't have a lot of lower-end. It has to do with your expectations. If you ask for the moon you're apt to get a little part of it. And maybe that's what we're here for. But I also think there have to be some areas where people can go and still have some success."***
>
> ***Assistant principal***

Placing students in vocational rather than college-bound programs has heretofore been an unstructured process guided by student and counselor scheduling choices and based on academic performance. High schools recognize a need for improved programs with vocational outcomes for youth who will enter the job market directly after high school. This goes hand-in-hand with making conscious, well-planned decisions regarding which students are college bound and which students will be best served through vocationally oriented programs.

We found tremendous concern among administrators, teachers and counselors about the potential abuse of student tracking. Informants were concerned that minority youth are in danger of being funneled into vocational programs and denied access to the more elite college-bound courses. At the same time, our informants expressed a tremendous need for high-quality vocational programs. When only a minority of graduating seniors enter college, schools need to respond to the majority of students by preparing them for jobs and adult life. If an alternative to the college track is not offered, the non-college bound students and lower achievers are placed in jeopardy. The only choice they have is to "learn to survive." The ones who don't learn to survive drop out:

> *"Some of them are not as successful as they should be, but they learn that there is a minimum you've got to achieve and most of them achieve it. And if they don't, do they drop out because of attendance problems? Or drugs or family problems? Either way, they drop out."*
>
> *Assistant principal*

Parents expressed concern about lack of equity.
Migrant and Native American parents we spoke with did not feel that their children have equal access to services or benefits of the school program. Their sons are denied an opportunity to take certain classes. High school students feel that the counselors are not available for them:

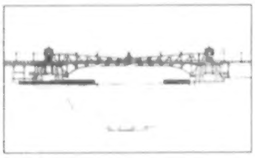
> *"...because they are deciding which boys can do a certain kind of work or perform something. And if they don't like the boy, then they don't put him in those classes in high school."*
>
> *Parent*

Parents expressed concern that their children are perceived and treated as if they are dishonest. Demands are made upon their children, in the name of protecting school property or preventing theft and deceit, that are not placed on other students:

> *"A girl asked if she could use the sewing machine, and the teacher asked her for a piece of personal property, a ring, so she could use that machine. 'If you break the machine, I will keep the ring.' The teacher lost the ring."*
>
> *Parent*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS



Alternative high school programs are available for respite and specialized programs, with safeguards for transition back to regular programs.

THE PROBLEM

Across the U.S., high schools are trying to adapt to serve a more diverse and challenging student population. The rapid growth in the number of alternative schools reflects the need for more flexible, individual programming for students who don't fit into the regular high school program, "students who have a hard time fitting into our structure, which is a narrower road." (Assistant principal)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Alternative schools are set up to serve distinct groups of students.

According to some, alternative schools serve students who can't make it in the regular high school. Others say they serve students who don't fit into the regular school. Most agree that while the students differ, they share similar needs.

The students who can't make it include migrant students and other students who must work and cannot attend classes during the day. Other students who can't survive in the traditional school are those without the English language skills needed to keep up in the regular classes.

Other students, such as Native American students in largely non-Native districts, need an alternative because they feel culturally alienated from the dominant school population. Yet other students have lost the self-esteem to try to keep up in the regular program:

> ***"The high school sets up an atmosphere for failure. The attitude is 'Okay, boys and girls, this is going to be an awakening for you to the real world.'"***
>
> *Native American parent*

Whether because of family dysfunction, a history of academic failure, poor attendance, discipline problems, poverty, or cultural dissonance, many students need something that the regular schools do not provide. Alternative programs are willing to work with students on the students' terms. Many will work with students until age 21, and will accept older individuals who need a few credits for their diploma.

Alternative schools meet real student needs.

For migrant high school students, the alternative schools meet a variety of needs that the regular high schools cannot meet:

1. *Flexible schedule.* For students who must work during the day, the alternative school offers classes in the late afternoon and evenings.
2. *ESL instruction.* The region serves migrant students with quite diverse educational needs and

backgrounds, from newly arrived students from rural areas of Mexico who have little or no schooling, to students from Mexico City with strong educational backgrounds but little English. Both groups have difficulty in the regular high school, where bilingual tutoring resources are often inadequate, and ESL instructors are not well trained.

An alternative school for migrant students offers these groups of students ESL instruction from teachers who are often better trained and familiar with the culture.

For Native American students, the advantages of the alternative schools are less clear. Informants speculated that Native American students went to alternative schools:

1. Because they needed to be somewhere else at the time—because they were not able to hear what their teachers were telling them and they needed a respite from the regular program.
2. Because they felt alienated as a minority in the regular high school and preferred the tribal school.

According to one Native American parent, the tribal school is regarded as the alternative for a child:

> *"...when you're tired of looking at them because they don't want to make it up in school. Kids who can't make it in the public school because of their attendance or their attitude. Or if they've been kicked out for whatever reason. I don't think they're learning anything there. I think the public school offers a better educational system. It's not perfect, but it's better."*

Another reason why Native American students transfer to the tribal school is that parents have experienced an impasse in communicating with the district. One parent knew of about 10 Native American families who were sending their children outside the district to the tribal school or another alternative, while another parent who was saddened by this noted:

> *"I was really kind of glad that the elder said, 'No matter where you go, you're going to bump into those types of people.' Sounds to me like he's trying to talk his daughter out of doing it."*
> *Native American parent*

In general, the alternative schools are able to offer much more individualization than the traditional high schools. Local program options include GED, ESL, and childcare lab. There are programs for students over age 21, for teenage mothers, for at-risk seventh- and eighth-grade students, and a program for gang intervention. One district currently offers 17 alternative programs, and is constantly developing new ones to keep up with student needs.

The alternative schools offer students features that the regular schools don't.

Informants described various characteristics of alternative schools in the region that attracted students:

- Small size.
- Caring staff.
- Staff who monitor attendance more closely than regular school staff.
- Family-like atmosphere.
- Flexibility to award partial credits.
- Acceptance by staff.
- Less formal setting.
- Bilingual tutoring and support.
- Trained ESL instruction.
- Schedule that allows students to work; flexible hours and days.
- Teachers who choose to work with difficult students and are skilled in helping them.
- Peers who share background and experiences.
- Schools that are able to change more easily than the regular schools to meet student needs:

> *"We're always in a state of flux and change. Every year we try something different."*
> *Director of alternative program*

- Staff who contact students who have dropped out to recruit them back into alternative programs.
- A variety of support groups (e.g., substance abuse, sexual abuse).
- Child care and parenting classes.

Districts have safeguards to prevent tracking students or losing track of them in the alternative schools.

Whenever districts offer separate or parallel programs, there is the danger of tracking or dumping students of different status and backgrounds into programs that prepare them for different post-school futures. Alternative programs can be a means for a district to weed out students who are viewed as troublemakers and promote the attendance of students who fit the existing system. Alternative schools can also be safety nets for students who need a respite from the regular program or who need individualized supports that the regular program can't provide. The alternatives can help the student to fit in and meet the high expectations of the traditional high school.

Students who don't fit in the regular school may lose their right to attend school because they don't follow the rules, and losing the right to attend school is a natural consequence of missing credits or excessive absence. The alternative "has to complement the traditional program and work in a partnership for the betterment of students." This requires close communication and coordination between the traditional and alternative program.

Districts can implement safeguards to prevent misuse of alternative placements by:

1. *Providing strong committed staff for the alternative program:* Insuring that the program is not a dumping ground for staff, and that staff want to be there "to teach and care for these kids," as a project coordinator for alternative programs said. The alternative staff has to stay small and family-like, and staff must have a say in the daily program operations.

2. *Planning close coordination and teamwork between alternative and regular program staff:* This assures that students can move back and forth between programs easily if they want to, keeping in mind that the goal is whatever it takes to get students through the system and a diploma.

   One informant felt that districts should rotate their staff in and out of the alternatives. Currently, regular and alternative staff are poorly informed about each other's programs. Greater understanding might increase staff ability to help students transition back and forth—and eventually back to the regular program.

3. *Offering students opportunities for credit make-up in evening classes:* Districts allow students to take courses without requiring them to enroll in the alternative school. This is especially important for younger students. An alternative program director cited a local study indicating that students who enter the alternative school at the middle school level are less likely to complete the program or to transition back to the regular school than older students.

4. *Providing that students are jointly "owned" by both the regular and the alternative high schools:* Currently, when a student moves from the regular school to an alternative placement, the regular school may not know what happens to the student unless he or she returns. If the goal is to return these students back to their regular high school programs, the regular school needs to maintain contact to evaluate whether the alternative placement is working.

5. *Providing each student with a counselor or staff member to advocate for the student at the alternative program:* Currently, some districts simply call the alternative program to let them know a student is arriving. One district has one full-time employee who tracks students—but their alternatives serve about 900 students. The odds of getting students back into their regular programs increase if students are followed on an individual basis:

> *"If you go up and hand-schedule our kids individually by teacher, I know they'll be*

> *successful in the regular school. But it's a time-consuming effort. If we could have that flexibility, it might work wonders for the kids."*
>
> *Alternative school administrator*

However, alternative schools have some worrisome drawbacks and limitations.
Curriculum differentiation. Alternative programs do not always prepare students to apply to college after they graduate or get their GED. Some parents and students do not understand this when the student enters the alternative program. It's true that some students get their GED and then return to the regular school for one or two years to take college-prep courses or to continue learning English. Some students apply to community colleges. But the alternative schools do not keep accurate data on these outcomes.

Traditional and alternative schools prepare students for different outcomes. According to the director of one alternative school:

> *"The best place for a kid to get a good education is in a traditional school. If we get a kid who wants to go on to college, he needs to have interaction with other kids who have high educational values, instructors teaching at a higher level. We really teach the middle kid here. We have to accommodate all the kids."*

Lack of student advocates. Unlike many traditional school programs, programs that serve migrant secondary students often lack powerful advocates in the district. These programs are often allowed to exist because they generate district revenue. Yet in some instances the programs are in serious need of additional resources—more space, a better location, more teaching staff. Program staff have a hard time rallying support for these programs for several reasons. Many migrant high school students have no parents or family in the area, so there are no parent advocates to voice their concerns. The students are usually not a product of the system, so the district feels no obligation to help them. Also, many of the students are illegal, and although this is not officially a problem for schools, their status indirectly influences how they are regarded:

> *"So, directly, whether they are citizens has no bearing. Indirectly, it has a bearing because of the fact that there is the underlying feeling they are a second-class group of citizens. Our kids don't have parents to do advocating for them."*
>
> *Director of alternative school*

Many non-migrant students in the alternative programs also lack a parent or adult advocate. One local study found that most of the students in the alternative school were living on their own by 11th or 12th grade.

Makeshift academic programs. The staff in alternative schools are not trained in all the content areas they must teach. They are also required to teach groups of students who are very diverse in terms of academic level. One teacher may have to teach English to a class of students who function at the eighth- to 12th-grade levels. Therefore teachers must adapt materials to work with students who are at several different grade levels. Alternative staff must often teach to the middle to accommodate all students. The result is often a lower quality of instruction in the content areas than in the regular school:

> *"The teacher will try to individualize enough, but it's make-do—we steal stuff, we don't use the district-required text because it might be too high for some of our kids, and too low for others, so you walk into a classroom and you get a whole makeshift. The teachers are doing all subjects. Logic will tell you they're not skilled in all the subject areas."*
>
> *Director of alternative program*

The growth of alternative schools raises the question of whether parallel programs are being created because the regular schools are not flexible enough to accommodate the needs of students who can't fit within the existing rules. There was little criticism of the alternative school concept among our informants. It appears that it is too much to imagine that the regular high school can accommodate the diverse populations of students who are now being served in alternative programs. One teacher who praised the alternative programs added, "But we need to keep kids in regular school to learn coping skills to live successfully in the larger community."

Another director of an alternative program cited the need for extended day programs in traditional high schools:

> *"That would be the number one flexibility that would just open up a new world to migrant students. In Mexico, the high schools are open day and night. If we did the same thing, I think we'd pick up a lot of those kids."*

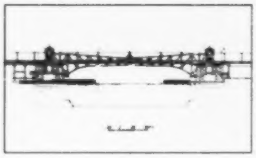
Clearly, students need safety nets and respite, and these are important roles that the alternatives play. Districts must, however, ask themselves whether the alternative safety net serves to protect the standards and expectations of the traditional school, rather than the failing student. Students must not be removed to alternatives to preserve a school's high standard of excellence, *but to enable all students to access that standard.* As the director of one alternative program said:

> *"We feel our mission is to accept any kid that wants to come and provide him with an opportunity for getting a high school diploma."*

It seems that, for many reasons, this is no longer the traditional high school's mission.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DROPOUT PREVENTION



Schools provide long-term and comprehensive dropout prevention interventions.

THE PROBLEM

Migrant and Native American students are at risk for dropping out of school for many causes. These causes vary across the districts in the sample, but they include:

- Lack of self esteem.
- Lack of successful role models.
- Lack of information about future options.
- Family circumstances, such as parent substance abuse, childcare responsibilities, and poverty.
- Attendance problems.
- Student isolation.
- Lack of basic skills proficiency.

Informants from the districts and community agencies acknowledged that dropout prevention requires more than a band-aid approach. The region's alternative schools reflect one major structural change districts have implemented to retain students who can't make it in the traditional system (see Chapter 15). Districts are introducing more flexibility into programs to accommodate student needs (see Chapter 7). In addition, informants cited other actions schools have taken.

It is difficult to describe the extent of the dropout problem precisely, because most districts do not have a formal tracking system to determine how many students drop out of school:

> ***"Most schools do not have the capability to track students. They can't. It's an impossible task."***
> ***Special education director***

RECOMMENDATIONS

School and other agency strategies address the root causes of dropping out of school.

Self-esteem inoculation. One preventive strategy fosters student self-esteem at the elementary level, with the goal of enabling students to weather bad experiences with teachers, parents, and administrators. For example, one informant explained that for Native American students, family and home problems may have a great effect on the student's education. Because the school (and the student) often can't do anything about the family situation, schools try to do everything possible during the school day to build up the student's self-esteem. According to one informant, this includes familiarizing students with their cultural heritage so that they develop pride in their history.

Close home-school cooperation. Schools maintain frequent communication with parents— school staff get to know parents and family situations, make home visits to follow up on absences or problems, emphasize the importance of education for their children, inform parents of student absences before the student is in danger of suspension, inform parents of student performance before failing grades are reported, and make frequent informal telephone calls to parents about student performance and attendance rather than sending letters. Schools listen to parents who tell them they want ongoing regular information about their child's performance—and not just a letter when the child is a junior or a senior and seriously behind in achievement:

> *"I've heard a lot of parents say our Indian children take the easy way out, by taking the easiest classes. And I'd like to see how the teachers keep track of what classes the children are taking, and maybe write a note home to the parents. There are a couple of parents who have said they just found out that the child is not going to make it, because he has taken so many electives, he didn't take enough requirements. Even send a note home with the child, and if the child doesn't give it to them, well then, have the school mail it to them, regardless of the cost. I always hear, 'Well, I have 45 students, how can I do this?' I always hear that."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Teachers who have telephones in their classrooms can make these home contacts more routinely than if they have to obtain access to a telephone.

In some cases, high-school-age Native American students may be living on their own, or with another adult or relative. When these students are attending school in a district far from the parents' home, the student may need help to find local resources for housing in order to remain enrolled in school.

Develop basic skills proficiency. Many students who need basic skills remediation have dropped out by the time they get to high school. One district believes that providing remediation in the ninth grade "increases longevity" by developing student skills needed to succeed.

Provide increased counselling services across all grade levels. Underscoring the belief that the dropout problem has many roots in the home environment rather than the school environment, schools provide counselors who are trained to work with students and with parents, particularly in the areas of attendance, substance abuse problems, family survival issues, and pregnancy prevention:

> *"You need more counselling services for kids—people making home visits. One time, most of the district schools did a lot of home visits. Even my programs don't do the amount of home visits we did 10 years ago. It's a thing that has to be volunteer, or you have to pay for, now."*
>
> *Director of alternative program*

Provide adult role models. Students from migrant and Native American families may not have adult role models in their communities who can encourage them to be teachers, engineers, business owners, computer programmers, or counselors. Their parents may not be able to give them advice about applying to college and pursuing a career.

Schools take on responsibility for educating parents about options for postsecondary schooling and training, scholarships and financial assistance. The schools recruit speakers or mentors from colleges, technical schools, and local businesses to widen students' perspectives, and introduce them to a personal contact—someone students can later call to answer their individual questions.

Hook students into school through extracurricular activities. One district uses sports as an incentive for student performance. The district pays for sports equipment so that students aren't excluded because of income. The district and school board agree to fund as many activities as possible if there is sufficient student interest.

In another district, staff would like to offer more cultural activities for students at the secondary level, where they feel that Hispanic students begin to feel like outsiders:

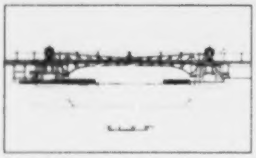
> *"At the other end [high school], they become more of a minority. There's clubs they can join, but they choose not to."*
>
> *Bilingual aide*

More alternatives, such as drama and dance groups, would offer students opportunities to select activities that keep them feeling as if they are part of the school community.

Student participation in sports and other extracurricular activities also has the effect of getting students to mix and make friends with other students. Parents need to understand the benefits of these activities, especially when it involves a sacrifice for the family (i.e., the student would otherwise work or do child care after school). Schools help parents to understand how their children develop socially through after-school activities. The activities help Limited English Proficient students to practice their language skills and to feel accepted and wanted by their peers, and this makes them feel that school is a safe place to be.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TARGETED PREVENTION



The school offers sex and drug counselling and parenting education.

THE PROBLEM

Despite the agricultural focus and rural nature of many of the school districts in the study, the districts are not exempt from the social problems that have been more commonly associated with urban areas. Some of these problems disproportionately affect migrant and Native American students. All of these problems have complex social causes that require communities to join together to solve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools develop counselling services in response to student needs.

Parents expressed the need teen and parent counselling as a preventive strategy for prevalent problems—teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol use, domestic violence and other family problems. The counselling services in most districts were very limited. Because the student-to-counselor ratio is high, it is very important that the individuals hired in these positions be effective—that they have an understanding and rapport with students that make students feel comfortable talking about their problems:

> ***"The middle school does have a counselor. But he's not a person that an Indian girl would go up to and say, 'I think I'm pregnant, what should I do?' or 'My dad's beating up my mom.' Because those kinds of crisis things happen all the time."***
>
> ***Native American elementary teacher***

The schools are still defining their role in providing social services:

> ***"We keep drawing the lines, and then we keep crossing them out."***
>
> ***Elementary principal***

Some school staff view case-management services as one answer to the family problems that students experience. One part of these services is family-member training in the skills to cope with their problems.

Schools have a realistic notion of the substance abuse problem and join with other community resources in prevention and treatment.

Districts in the area recognize that drug and alcohol abuse are very real threats to the success of their students. At one end of the spectrum of responses, a district may see the need for increased counselling services that are now readily available only to students who are eligible for special education. At the other end, a district provides several counselors for students with substance-abuse problems, as well as referrals to residential treatment centers across the state.

In one district, a very thorough program of screening and supports is in place for students at high risk for substance abuse. Students at risk are identified at the elementary level, where support groups and counselors are available for problem solving. The school also coordinates a mentorship program with caring adults, outside referrals to therapists, and inservice training and supports for teachers in behavior management.

Another district is intervening at the elementary school level by identifying at-risk students and providing counselling. Staff feel that early intervention is critical in breaking cycles of familial dependence on drugs and alcohol. Services are provided by a team of school staff and counselors from other community agencies. Support groups and individual counselling focus on the self-esteem and classroom behavior problems that often occur in children from homes with drug- and alcohol-dependence problems.

Some Native American leaders believe that there is "an awful lot of denial" in regard to alcohol and drug abuse. Some leaders see it as their role to work with parents and raise their consciousness about this issue and its effects on children and families. Native American leaders and parents disagree, however, about how to deal with these issues, and whether they should be the responsibility of the Indian Education Committee or the PAC. In one district, a Native American education counselor is paid out of Johnson-O'Malley funds to provide family counselling, which includes informing parents about the effects of alcohol and drug dependency on children, and resources for seeking assistance. Many Native American parents regard this counselor as their primary contact with the school, their "interpreter and advocate":

> *"In our community, we just have to face the facts. They say our average rate of alcoholism in the homes is one out of four families. A lot of our behavior problems, our social problems, all relate to alcoholism."*
> *Native American elementary teacher*

Native American informants were very sensitive when the schools point a finger and stereotype Native Americans as having dependency problems. Although there is growing recognition of the magnitude of dependency problems, and the long-term effects on children and Native American society, there is lack of agreement among the Native American community about how to deal with these problems. If initiatives from within the Native American community cannot be agreed upon, certainly initiatives from the outside will be seen as even less acceptable.

Schools plan sex and parenting education in coordination with schools, parents, and community resources.

Informants from the districts, tribes, and Hispanic community addressed students' need for sex education and training in parenting skills. In one district, for example, one quarter of last year's graduating class of girls had babies.

Individuals have differing concerns and values that influence what these programs should look like. All these parties therefore need to have a voice in designing these programs. For example, a traditional Native American approach to sex education involves the child's participation in rituals at certain ages. One informant observed that it may now be necessary to start this process earlier than tradition prescribed, simply as a matter of survival in the modern world.

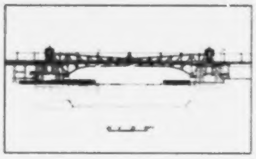
The problem of teen pregnancies raises the issue of parenting training. Some Native American informants emphasized that many of their children needed these programs because many of them have lacked good parental role models. Some Hispanic informants expressed concerns that the programs in use have been developed for Anglo parents and do not work with Hispanic families.

Informants noted several attributes of successful programs for sex, drug, and parenting education:

- Programs are designed with input from families and the local communities.
- Programs are designed to be "cool" and to have street value to students. This means that the programs often need to appeal to the youth's priorities (such as personal appearance or freedom) rather than more traditional priorities (such as death or disease) that young people cannot yet appreciate.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS



Supplemental funding for special populations is used to enhance basic high-quality educational programs.

THE PROBLEM

As throughout the nation, the districts in the region have limited resources and seemingly unlimited needs. Because of special conditions in the Yakima Valley—poverty, large numbers of non-English-speaking students, non-taxable land—schools receive significant state and federal supplements. These supplemental funds are designed to enhance basic educational services for children with specified needs and characteristics.

A single child can generate many different categories of funds: basic education, Chapter 1, Learning Assistance Program, migrant, bilingual, and special education. Finding legal ways to match teachers, materials and other resources to children's needs is a constant and time-consuming challenge to all districts:

> ***"One of the problems we face is how to run our programs for the children and not the auditors."***
> ***School administrator***

The problem of complying with the myriad federal regulations for each funding source is intensified in the Yakima Valley because the nature of the school population makes districts eligible to receive so many different sources of funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

High-quality basic education programs are in place which respond to a wide range of learners and provide a strong foundation for supplemental services.

In order for equity programs to work, schools have to have strong basic education foundations, frameworks and curricula. When the basic education program is strong, then equity programs (e.g., bilingual education) can truly be supplemental. When the basic education program is weak, the strength of the supplemental program is sapped to shore up basic education:

> ***"...because too often equity programs become replacements for basic education programs where they should be supplemental, adding to a basic education program for those children who need the extra support, rather than replacing the basic education program that's not good enough or not enough."***
> ***Administrator, special education***

Administrators of equity programs need to have power to influence regular education programs. If equity and basic education programs remain separate, then they cannot be effective.

A strong basic education program requires a strong staff development program:

> ***"Any equity program cannot do anything unless you have basic education staff who are trained and accepting of a pluralistic or multicultural education, and also understand equity issues in a more global perspective."***
> ***Administrator***

State and federal audit practices also impinge on schools' ability to blend basic education and equity programs. Rules and regulations change constantly, and schools must dedicate time and resources to document that they are using funds as prescribed by law.

Schools use supplementary funds to enhance basic education programs.

Although the concept of using special funds to enrich and supplement basic programs seems rather simple, implementation is a tremendous challenge. Consider for example the monolingual child who enters a regular education classroom—the locus of basic education—where all instruction is provided in English. The monolingual child is unable to benefit from the instruction and is effectively barred from basic education services. Efforts to mediate the English instruction may include small-group instruction from a paraprofessional, removal from the classroom for short or long periods of time, or tutorial support.

Even when children are "pulled out" of the regular classroom for supplemental services, the end result can be a denial of basic education services. In several elementary schools, bilingual children were removed from the regular classroom for English instruction. For many, the English instruction occurred during reading time. Under these circumstances, the bilingual child may not receive any reading instruction at all.

Many districts fall into an easy trap. Informants told us that it is not uncommon for "supplemental" services to be the *only* resource for minority students. The funds are used to supplant or replace the program that should be provided through basic educational funds.

Informants across districts and job classifications gave themselves mixed reviews when evaluating their success in using basic education resources to enhance services for Native American and Mexican children:

- One administrator felt that his district was on the "cutting edge" with regard to the blending of educational programs and funds.
- In another district, a principal voiced discomfort that in the elementary migrant program, a bilingual instructional assistant provides 95 percent of the instruction. There is no time allotted for the assistant and the teacher to plan together—resulting in very little professional supervision and involvement. Thus, migrant students, who bring *more* money into the district than other students, receive *less* education.

Districts vary in how they regard supplementary funds—which will affect whether in fact children whose needs generate these funds will receive the intended supplemental services. Informants told us about the various safeguards schools can use to assure that categorical funds enrich rather than supplant basic education:

- Programs, personnel and services are integrated. For example, certificated teacher time *and* paraprofessional time is available to bilingual children in the regular classroom. Rather than having separate programs, supplemental assistance is provided to improve the student's ability to benefit from the regular program.
- Minority staff are available in sufficient numbers to mediate and interpret so that students from non-Anglo cultures can succeed in an integrated school program.
- Basic education funds are used to support programs and services for minority children—e.g., to provide supplementary materials and pay staff salaries for Indian Education programs or bilingual classrooms.
- Special funds are carefully managed at the central office and building level. One district experienced problems with federal compliance and with quality when control of all equity funds was delegated to the building level. Building-based management of equity funds needs to be carefully planned and supervised.
- Basic education staff are well versed in teaching methods and theory that will assist children who are from non-Anglo cultures or who are second-language learners.
- Paraprofessionals receive sufficient support and inservice training to assure that the instructional services they provide are of benefit to the student and complement rather than replace basic education services.

Equity staff roles are not diluted with "extra" tasks that are for most students provided by basic educational staff.

Migrant, bilingual and Indian Education staff are hired to perform specific duties.

- The migrant home visitor is responsible for identifying migrant students, certifying their eligibility to receive migrant services, and making referrals to services.
- Indian Education staff have varied responsibilities which are in part determined by Indian parents and vary in each district. These responsibilities generally include tutoring, and counselling.
- Bilingual staff provide instructional services to assist students in all academic areas, including English.

Ideally, equity and basic education staff share ownership and responsibility for minority students. The two groups of staff most often have some overlapping duties. Many duties are, however, distinct and specified by law and district policy. A basic rule of thumb is: Basic education provides the same thing to every child, and equity programs provide the required extra support for minority students. While their funding sources and duties may differ, both groups of staff share a common goal: improving educational outcomes for minority students.

Unfortunately, when children, staff and programs are divided into categories, there can be negative results. Staff view children differently—"ours" and "yours"—and may seek specialized solutions based on ethnic distinctions when ethnicity is not an important factor. Children's problems and needs may be inappropriately attributed to their ethnicity.

Informants in most districts cited ways that equity staff are used to address problems that would be most appropriately dealt with by basic education staff:

- Indian home visitors might be called in by teaching staff in order to assist with hygiene and health issues, e.g., eyeglasses, lice.
- Migrant staff might be called in to serve as school clerks, secretaries, interpreters, transportation aides, translators, and playground supervisors.

Equity staff expressed concern that when a bilingual child becomes sick at school, bilingual staff are called in to take the child home. For an Anglo child, a different procedure is followed. This erodes the time available for equity staff to perform their specified duties, such as enrolling children in the migrant program or providing counselling services to Indian children. Some equity staff are funded through a combination of equity funds and basic education funds. While this practice can result in certain benefits—such as shared "ownership" of all students, and audit protection—the practice can also dilute the activities of equity staff with basic education responsibilities. The problem is compounded by the fact that most equity staff are paraprofessionals and find it difficult to refuse requests from professional staff.

Diluting the time of equity staff has a number of consequences, according to our informants. The most obvious, of course, is that supplemental services for minority children are reduced.

There are also funding consequences. When Indian Education staff or a migrant home visitor's time becomes so badly eroded that they cannot devote adequate time to identifying eligible children, the district will not receive all the funds for which they are eligible.

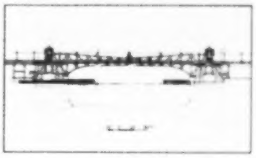
Equity staff receive incentives for accepting additional responsibilities.

Ideally, schools recognize that equity staff frequently have additional responsibilities. Incentives are provided to encourage teachers to stay with the district. Efforts are made to analyze the sources of "burnout," and steps are taken to mitigate these problems.

We were told of many instances of teacher burnout in bilingual programs. Bilingual programs demand much more preparation time than basic education programs. Yet the districts, unlike other public agencies, rarely offer incentives or excess pay to cover these added responsibilities and qualifications.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

LOCAL LEADERSHIP



Key individuals provide leadership and take risks.

THE PROBLEM

The fundamental changes districts need to make in response to the increasing numbers of Hispanic and Native American students require a catalyst and a navigator—someone to get the process started and someone to guide it along. Parents can share in this leadership, but they can't do it without someone from within the system to move it in the right direction.

In many of the districts, certain individuals have taken on the responsibility of advocating for changes and progressive programs for migrant and Native American students. These individuals can have a profound effect on programs for these students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key individuals have progressive ideas they are willing to risk implementing, and the skills to influence others.

Key leaders played a role in many districts in changing programs for migrant and Native American students and staff attitudes towards serving these students. In one district, the director of bilingual programs not only put into place important reforms and programs, but also led the district in its interest and commitment to bilingual students. Another key individual implemented a program that created a positive school environment. All children in the school are given rewards by the principal. The staff find something that each child can be rewarded for. This positive attitude carries over to the teaching staff through the principal's leadership—the principal makes the teachers take the same approach, and adopt the same attitude of finding something positive in each child.

In many cases, key individuals are administrators in positions where they can have the most impact. In some districts, front-line staff spoke with such desperation about the overwhelming problems they face that they seemed to be asking for someone in a leadership position to tell them what to do. The danger of the charismatic leader in an administrative position is that when this individual leaves, or is pushed out because of his or her opinions, continued progress and reform are threatened. Key individuals must be very skilled in anchoring programs and positive building culture to others in the district, and to policies that will sustain temporal changes in leadership. Some leaders expressed concerns about the reforms they advocated:

> ***"If we disappear, you never know what's going to walk in here, and years of work can go right down the drain."***
> ***Administrator of federal programs***

> ***"We changed administrations right in the middle. And originally the administration was really focussing on direct instruction. And they were implementing top-down. Then when we had to change administration, we no longer had that emphasis, and so we ended up with a real partial implementation, very minimal."***
> ***District administrator***

Some administrators are viewed as not advocating for change because change may endanger their positions. They remain safe by supporting the status quo.

Although key individuals are often administrators, some front-line staff take risks and are able to move school or district policies. In one school, if a home visitor cannot get in contact with a parent, then a teacher, or even the principal, will take on the responsibility to go out to the home. In one district, a migrant counselor has made policy for the students in his school. He has done this by getting involved in building curriculum and textbook decisions that affect migrant students, raising questions about school-wide activities, such as assemblies and the school newspaper, to insure they are planned with the needs of Limited English Proficient students in mind, and always pushing other teachers' and administrators' awareness of student needs. Taking on a role like this requires skills in systems change and leadership that individuals often do not get a chance to develop under school district conditions. Many of these leaders have learned these skills in other community, volunteer, or political settings.

CHAPTER TWENTY

PLANNING FOR EQUITY

Strategic planning at all levels of school administration gives priority to equity for all students and assures that all staff are working together to achieve common goals.

THE PROBLEM

In most school districts, individual schools and even classrooms are given tremendous discretion in the delivery of educational programs. Through their day-to-day activities—making lesson plans, interacting with children and families, choosing what to teach and how to teach it, enforcing discipline policies—teachers and principals implement unwritten policy with every action they take.

Certain areas, such as school construction, hiring, and data collection are recognized as the traditional arena for central administration control and policy development. Other areas are delegated overtly or by default to the control of building staff.

Policies and strategic planning which assure equity for all students frequently fall into the "default" category. While consultation support may be provided as a central office function, there may be no leadership that guides the activities of the entire district. In the absence of district-level leadership and strategic planning, the problems of educational equity are given uneven treatment. A child's educational fate becomes based on chance, that is, on where she lives, to which school she is assigned, and what the practices are within that school or classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts develop and implement long-range plans to improve educational programs and outcomes for minority students.

Even supporters of building-based management saw a critical role for district-level leadership in moving the entire educational system toward more equitable treatment of minority students.

In most cases, however, individual buildings and even individual teachers had the final say over programs and consequently ultimate control over implementing long-range plans. Nonetheless, the lack of strong central leadership had the potential to halt building-initiated change. We found that local superintendents are recognizing the changing demographics and making long-range plans for minority students. However, informants expressed frustration and even anger over the creeping pace of change.

However, central leadership which does not build consensus among all levels of school staff was also criticized. There is an important interaction that needs to take place between the individual school staff and central office staff in order to arrive at workable solutions. In one district, staff at the school level were able to work with the bilingual administrator to improve ESL programming. Together, they planned for smaller class sizes and created different levels of ESL instruction.

Inservice training for staff was cited over and over as an important intervention for improving programs for minority students. Inservice training to date, however, has not been effective because in most districts teachers attend voluntarily. Even when training in newly adopted district curricula is offered, teachers could choose not to attend and consequently to reject the new curriculum.

Incremental approaches to inservice education, driven by building staff, were used in the absence of strong central leadership support. One counselor kept a lookout for staff who were seeking more information and skills in working with minority students. He then tried to capitalize on their enthusiasm and commitment:

> ***"We have some dinosaurs here, no question. But you work with those who have the desire to teach—who are committed to the community's future."***
>
> ***High school migrant/bilingual counselor***

Staff in individual school buildings work together to plan and implement improved services for minority students.

The ideal school staff—from teachers to office staff—need to be unified by a common vision of improved educational outcomes for all students. They have a positive attitude, even in the face of serious, pervasive problems. They are open to change, whether it comes from the administration or the principal.

In contrast are staff members who do their own thing independent of other staff and administrators. They resist administrative leadership and stall change. These staff were characterized as "close to retirement" or as having "been here forever." Their proximity to retirement and long history of service to the district protects them. Perhaps more so in small communities where staff know each other more personally, there is an unspoken reluctance to actively try to remove them from teaching positions, despite inadequate performance.

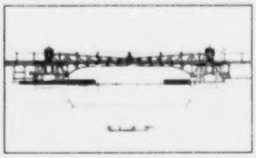
In one elementary school we found that staff support for their students is not limited to just the school day or the school building. There is a high degree of parent and staff activism. PAC groups are active and regard the school as a resource for many needs—not just education. Teachers go out into the community to talk with migrant parents and build their trust. Teachers are charged with the responsibility to get parents in for parent-teacher conferences. Almost three-quarters of the school's parents attended conferences.There is a high degree of trust, cooperation and teamwork among staff throughout the school and the district.

In the ideal school district, teachers and administrators have mutual trust and a shared sense of purpose. Teamwork, and reciprocal consultation are used to solve problems and find unique solutions for different students and programs.

Trust and respect among staff needs to extend to all levels—teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators. In some cases, informants pointed out that communication between professionals and paraprofessionals was hampered by educational and class differences. Particularly in districts that rely so heavily on paraprofessionals for instructional purposes, informants told us about the importance of good communication and teamwork.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

COORDINATION WITH HEALTH AGENCIES



Schools coordinate with health agencies to meet students' health needs.

THE PROBLEM

Migrant and Native American students are less likely than Anglo students to have access to medical insurance and a regular health provider. They are also at greater risk for health problems that affect school performance. Schools have not traditionally gotten involved in the health needs of middle-class and Anglo students; however, schools must redefine their role in coordinating with local health agencies to insure that all students are able to learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Migrant students are served through migrant health insurance and some district resources.

Schools address student health needs in several ways. Migrant students who are certified are eligible for migrant health insurance, which provides for annual physicals and accident insurance. Some districts set aside funds from their migrant education budget to cover other health needs, such as dental care, eyeglasses, and hearing tests—non-accidental health needs that migrant health insurance would not cover:

> *"That's a program responsibility. I don't know that there's any other money in this district that's dedicated to health services. I don't know that, but in the migrant program, we have in fact dedicated money to that kind of endeavor. We set it aside in our budget. I'm not sure that a lot of folks do that. It makes sense to me."*
>
> *District administrator*

Because health care must often come after basic needs for migrant families, it is very important that parents understand the benefits to which they are entitled with their child's health insurance. If parents don't know that they are eligible for a sliding-fee scale at the clinic, or that the district has a fund for eyeglasses, they may not use services that they could afford or that may be free. It is not always clear who is responsible for informing these families of their benefits.

All students have access to the district school nurses. The ratio of school nurses to students is extremely low—the state average is 1:1,500 students. Therefore these professionals are able to meet only the most basic health needs. According to one informant, school nurses don't get involved in migrant student physicals or other migrant student health needs—this is regarded as "a migrant thing to them." School nurses may draw the line at getting involved with migrant students because they are not paid with migrant education dollars, or because they know they do not have the time to take on this role.

The need for more school nurses was cited in all of the districts in the study:

> *"Most experienced home-school liaisons know their community's health-care resources. The school-health linkage is pretty strong. One serious problem is that there are not enough school nurses."*
>
> *Migrant education staff*

School staff make routine referrals to migrant and Indian health clinics.

In most schools, informants named someone in the building to whom teachers routinely refer migrant and Native American students in need of health care. In some buildings, this was the migrant education staff, the school nurse, the principal, or the school secretary. Very often, the migrant home visitor is regarded as the person responsible for referring migrant students to health services.

A district may be reluctant to get involved in migrant health needs because it may be very time-consuming. If a school initiates a medical referral for a child, the parent may not be able to take the child to the clinic, because of work schedule or lack of transportation. Then the school must make arrangements. In some districts, the migrant education staff follow through on these referrals.

Schools coordinate with community health agencies.

At the individual level, schools have informal mechanisms for getting student medical needs met through the network of migrant and Indian health clinics. If a migrant or Native American child has a medical need, there is usually someone in the building who knows where the child can get services. Several informants felt that an up-to-date directory of local health-care resources available to these families would be useful.

At the agency level, coordination between schools and health-care providers and agencies is much more sporadic. In one district, health-clinic staff participate in district staffings on migrant students. In another district, the referral process for early intervention programs is reported to be excellent as a result of the district's close communication with local hospitals.

In other districts, informants described a need for regular communication between the district and health clinics and DSHS for sharing information that affects policies. For example, when schools recently required that all students have measles shots for school entry, the local clinics were not informed. As a result, students had to wait at home and miss school until the clinics obtained the vaccine. Another informant attributed the lack of regular communication to districts not having billable hours that allow staff the time to meet. Instead, staff rely upon impromptu phone conferences, suggesting that communication is crisis-oriented rather than regular and preventive:

> *"There is not a forum for regular communication between the medical staff and the schools."*
> *Medical provider*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

TEACHER ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS

Teachers have positive attitudes towards and high expectations for all students.

THE PROBLEM

Children are tremendously influenced by their teachers' attitudes towards them. A teacher who communicates faith and high expectations for a student can exert a powerful influence on that child.

Most teachers have been prepared to work primarily with students from "squared-away" families—middle-class families without drug or alcohol problems, families who speak English and are part of the Anglo culture. Children from other cultures pose problems for these teachers. Children from dysfunctional families, from non-English-speaking homes, and from low-income backgrounds severely challenge these teachers. When teachers respond to these children with lowered expectations, prejudice, or lack of respect, they jeopardize the life chances of these students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers believe that every child can learn.

As several informants pointed out, teachers develop their expectations about students during their teacher training. Many regular education teachers have not been trained to work with the diverse groups of students they now have in their classrooms. Teachers who have not been trained to adapt their teaching methods to suit the needs of their students are likely to expect that the students change in order to make it in traditional instructional programs.

Effective teachers do not allow race, ethnicity, or family dysfunction to color their expectations of students. They realize the damage this does, both to individual students, and in the example it sets for the group. Administrators recognize the damage that a small group of biased teachers can cause in a building:

> ***"I have some teachers that can relate very well to Native American kids, and I have some— I shudder to put a Native American kid in there because they just don't understand the kids."***
>
> ***Elementary principal***

Effective teachers realize that there are no easy answers, like poverty or ethnicity to explain parents' behaviors:

> ***"Those parents can't get in their car. They don't have the gas to get a free weekly physical therapy session. Middle-class Anglo parents are going to take their kid up there because Children's Hospital is paying for it."***
>
> ***District administrator***

It is very handy to blame poverty and ethnicity. In one district, a home-based program was selected for infants because staff believed that parents wouldn't take the initiative to avail themselves of a free service. However, in other settings, home-based services are selected for practical reasons such as cost, or appropriate context for services.

Administrators are particularly attentive to the teacher attitudes that are conveyed in the elementary setting, where a teacher with negative attitudes can affect a student's experiences across his or her school life.

Effective teachers of Hispanic and migrant students realize that the role of the schools is to do more than teach these students English. The broad educational needs of these students are taken into account, including preparation for college. Teachers encourage all students, not just Anglo students, to enroll in academically challenging courses, and teachers foster student enthusiasm at every opportunity:

> *"This student wanted to enter a class where the most advanced students were, and she asked how she could get into that class. And what the teacher answered her is, 'That class is too hard for you. I think that you will not do well there. You will not make it there. Because if you go there your grades will go down lower. Right now you have an A. But if you go there you will get a B.' Then what the child thinks is that it is better to get an A in the group where the dummies (burros) go than to get a B in a group of more advanced students. So that is what they prefer, to take the enthusiasm away from the students."*
>
> ***Migrant parent***

The order for teachers of migrant and Native American students is often a tall one. As one informant said:

> *"It boils down to whether an educator feels he has a job or a vocation. The educators I most admire are the ones for whom the day isn't over at 3 or 4. Maybe it's not fair to expect that. One of my guiding slogans is, 'Change requires small disjointed steps taken as opportunities arise.' Well, I can't let those opportunities go by. Because if a parent is willing to come in and talk to me, that gives me greater insights into working with the student, and with the school. So maybe it can't be expected, and no, I don't get paid for it, and yes, it causes dissension at home, and I do it."*
>
> ***Migrant high school counselor***

Dedicated and effective staff put in overtime and capitalize on opportunities to earn student and parent trust. These staff also receive support from their school and district so that they are not left feeling they need to allocate their time and effort according to the percent of their time paid for by migrant funds, for example:

> *"The migrant program and the bilingual program have been very cooperative. But the bottom line is—that room was migrant and that room was bilingual. That's changing, and now I'm double-funded and I don't even care if the kids are migrant now. I'm still responsible for getting them certified to become migrant-eligible, but as far as educational services go, that's not even an issue. The issue is just language."*
>
> ***Migrant education teacher***

Teachers respect students and see the good and the potential in all students.

Successful teachers recognize that student self-esteem is a prerequisite to student retention and success. They cultivate it through their attitudes and their high expectations for students:

> *"I make sure they get into the right classes. I hold them to some stricter requirements than even the state has. I say, 'As long as you have me involved in your program, you will have math on your schedule, or go shopping someplace else.' They go, 'What for?' and I say, 'Hey, we have enough Mexicans pushing brooms in this country. We need more doctors, lawyers, pharmacists, and mid-managers.' Today you walk into math classrooms and a teacher may have 15 limited English-proficient students, whereas before there were none."*
>
> ***Migrant high school counselor***

School structure and discipline communicate respect for each student's cultural identity.

School discipline was an issue of concern to our informants. School staff and administrators want to create school buildings that are orderly, clean, efficient, and good places for learning. In some buildings very rigid policies are used, which one informant felt may actually contribute to violence and outbreaks. By taking an extreme view on fights in the park that other districts would write off to hormonal activity and stress, and instead are classified as assault with police intervention, students are hearing:

> *"...'You don't,' and there's no place you feel like 'you do.' 'You don't chew gum, you don't do this.' You could end up having a parent conference because you got caught chewing gum three times."*
>
> ***Bilingual paraprofessional***

Further, these policies have direct implications for Hispanic youth. They often conflict with the Hispanic community's vision of manliness. Hispanic youth and their parents experience the conflict between the Hispanic male's view and expression of manliness and the Anglo norms. Parents may perceive that their compliance with school disciplinary requirements will require their son to surrender his honor. When the parents and the school reach an impasse, the student may disappear.

These cultural clashes might be avoided if the school attempts to tie the student into the school culture, through positive activities and experiences or through personal ties to staff members who are genuinely concerned. Too often, activities are:

> *"...held out there like a carrot, not as a motivator. And it's the first thing the kid is pulled from in a disciplinary action."*
>
> *Bilingual paraprofessional*

Schools cannot tolerate outright violence. However, schools have to find the balance between shaving away the violence and destroying a youth's sense of manliness, or denying the transition from childhood to manhood. This conflict in cultural and school values may be most difficult in the middle school, where students are still viewed as children in the school culture. Most of the young Hispanic youth who are coming from Mexico are viewed as men in their families. They hold adult positions of responsibility at home, but when they arrive at school they are supposed to act like children again:

> *"When these kids come to us from a different culture, where their vision of themselves as a person is highly tied to manliness—to try to force them into a child's box, perceptions, and needs when they no longer have those needs, is to totally devalue them as a person. They're doing the best they can to be the best young man they know how to be. Especially in the case of previously-not-socialized-to-American-schools Hispanic males. We have to value each kid where they are. You can't tear out by the roots who they've been for the last 15 or 16 years of their lives."*
>
> *Bilingual paraprofessional*

Again, schools must find the right balance between valuing a student for who he or she is, and helping the student, gently, to fit into American life. While there is clearly a need for limits, extreme discipline and rigid controls leave some students feeling there is no one and no place for them—and then the schools lose those students. And often there is no one for those students outside the schools either:

> *"Everything that could be exciting and world- and eye-opening and intriguing is scary and foreign and out-of-place and off-the-wall. There's got to be something."*
>
> *Bilingual paraprofessional*

In many schools, that something is individual staff members who value students for who they are and the culture they have come from.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

STAFF ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

Teaching and administrative staff represent the ethnic makeup of the community and school.

THE PROBLEM

Many districts in the Yakima Valley serve a majority of students from Hispanic backgrounds, and some districts serve large numbers of Native American students. Yet the teaching and administrative staffs in these districts are predominantly Anglo.

Districts that recognize the importance of providing students with cultural role models attempt to increase the number of Hispanic and Native American staff through recruitment strategies, career-ladder, and tuition-assistance programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Districts believe that it is important to provide students with ethnic and cultural role models. A district's first step in developing effective school teams is to understand that students need bilingual and bicultural teachers and staff to relate to and to make them feel welcome and connected to the school. Students who see teachers and counselors who are like them are most likely to feel part of the school system themselves. Districts understand that it is important for students to be able to relate to *who* is saying something, as well as *what* is being said:

> ***"So kids can think—'Okay, I'll go with that because that person looks like me."***
>
> ***Social worker***

Bilingual/bicultural staff also frequently have more contact with Mexican and bilingual parents, which benefits the children. One informant put it this way:

> ***"I think because I am Mexican, they have more respect. To them I'm not only their children's teacher, but also theirs."***
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

Districts realize they need a strategy for recruiting hard-to-find bilingual and bicultural staff. Districts cannot simply rely on their usual formulas for advertising for trained minority staff. Informants stressed the need to target recruitment carefully. For example, one administrator observed, somewhat perplexed, that the district has tried, unsuccessfully, to recruit for minority staff in Idaho. Other informants recommended that districts use their already-hired bilingual and bicultural staff as recruiters, rather than use conservative Anglo administrators.

Recruitment poses greater challenges for small districts trying to hire minority staff. First, these districts have fewer resources available. Informants suggested that small districts could best use these resources by pooling their efforts and recruiting as a consortium, or at the ESD level, sharing resumes and eligible applicants.

This ties into the second challenge facing small districts, where economies of scale come into play when seeking minority staff. Small communities attract individuals who will settle and live until retirement. Low turnover and a relatively small staff mean that in any given year, the small district may have only two or three positions available: a high school math teacher, middle school English teacher, or third grade teacher. The challenge is to match the few minority candidates available to these few specific positions at a particular point in time.

Third, as for all positions, the applicant's minority status must be balanced with the district's needs to hire the best-qualified applicant. Districts face tremendous difficulties when they hire an unqualified teacher: "You know how difficult it is to weed out a bad teacher once you hire them. It's next to impossible." (Assistant principal)

Finally, districts in rural areas must educate applicants to the realities of their student populations and district amenities as part of their recruiting. Parents in one district suspect that their district has had a series of bad teachers because applicants recruited from outside the region have not been given enough information about what to expect when they relocate. Parents want applicants to understand the district demographics, the risk factors affecting the students:

> *"I think they need to be oriented about what they're coming to, so they're not coming in cold. If they knew what kind of kids they would be working with, they might have sought a job somewhere else, and we would have found someone who'd want to work with these kids."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Recruiting the wrong teachers, Anglo or minority, has second-order effects. Not only does it increase turnover but it also sets a bad example for students:

> *"...because the kids really look up to teacher here. And if you have a bad teacher, you're going to discourage a kid from continuing his education. There are not as many role models."*
>
> *Native American parent*

Successful districts use recruitment strategies that:

- Attempt to make teaching an attractive career option for minorities through positive role models, scholarships, loans, and salary increases.
- Include Native American and Hispanic staff on the interview panel.
- Use Native American and Hispanic district employees to actively recruit new staff.
- Pool resources with other districts or through the ESD for recruiting bilingual and bicultural staff, and for providing career ladder opportunities for staff in very small and rural districts.

Districts realize the limitations of recruiting staff from outside the district, and create career ladder opportunities for local staff and residents.

Some districts realize that if they try really hard to find minority staff and they fail despite their best efforts, they have gone as far as they can go on that road. The next logical thing to do is to create local career-ladder opportunities whereby individuals who are tied to the region can get training to become paraprofessionals and certificated teachers:

> *"I've lost bilingual teachers to more desirable districts. Why work in a district where it's hard? We're more apt to keep lower valley people. The indigenous people are more likely to stay. They're from here, they have family ties."*
>
> *District administrator*

Districts in the study differ in the availability of these programs. Some districts have set up programs of financial support to help instructional assistants get teacher certification. There are tuition-assistance programs for teachers wanting special education endorsement, or for paraprofessionals wanting to become special education teachers. These career-ladder programs may triage applicants, accepting those who have already fulfilled initial requirements or credits. In one district, financial assistance for taking classes is contingent upon the aide maintaining his/her position and attending school full time. For many aides, this is too stressful, or impossible if there are family responsibilities.

There was unanimous support for these career-ladder programs. We interviewed many Hispanic and Native

American informants who have advanced in their careers through assistance from these programs, some of which are no longer in existence:

> *"Financial support encouraged me to continue on. There are no programs like that now."*
> *Elementary bilingual teacher*

We also interviewed bilingual paraprofessionals who would seize an opportunity for assistance. As one bilingual paraprofessional who has worked in a district for 12 years said:

> *"I'd do it in a minute. Distance is not a problem, no. There's a handful here that I know we would jump at the opportunity to go back to school."*

Districts searching east of the Mississippi for bilingual teachers often have a pool of already experienced, motivated paraprofessionals in their employ who are firmly tied to the region, and for whom staff retention is not an issue. Yet the districts don't consider the advantages of helping these individuals develop professionally.

Administrators and paraprofessionals may view the career-ladder issue quite differently. While most of the aides with whom we spoke would welcome financial support towards a degree or certificate, some administrators perceived the aides as not being motivated:

> *"It's strange—you don't have many people who are aides who want their degrees. There's nothing in their culture that makes them comfortable with picking themselves up and going to Central."*
> *District administrator*

In the eyes of the aides, however, it appeared to be a matter of resources and logistics, not of motivation based on cultural values.

The main problem with existing career-ladder programs is that they are limited. There are waiting lists, and limited slots. According to informants, some paraprofessionals move to districts that offer scholarships and incentives for earning certificates.

For a career-ladder program to be successful, candidates must have access to courses—the closer to home, the better. Locally, Heritage College is developing courses that are accessible and tailored to the needs of the region:

> *"Heritage is really developing one of the best programs for training people that are going to be dealing with language-acquisition children. What Heritage does that makes them outstanding is, they take training to the district. They deliver."*
> *Coordinator, bilingual programs*

School districts that are serious about developing a career-ladder program will enlist the cooperation of institutions of higher education—a necessary ally in the process.

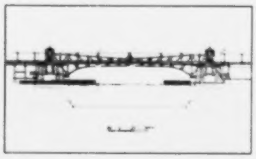
The Yakima Indian Nation also supported higher-education programs at one time by bringing college courses to the reservation. Indians and non-Indians alike benefitted from courses that were imported from Eastern Washington University and paid for by the tribe.

Some recruitment and staff development problems are more than a small district can solve alone.

Small districts realize that they must collaborate with other districts, ESDs, or regional agencies to address some of the challenges of recruiting and training bilingual and bicultural staff. Small, isolated districts may not be able to recruit staff on account of serious housing shortages that are beyond the district's control. Districts seeking Native American staff may find that federal funds supporting higher education for Native Americans have been reduced, or are awarded to tribes in other regions of the country. Small districts many not have large budgets for outside recruitment, and may need to pool their resources with other districts in the region.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

STAFF SKILLS AND COMMITMENT



Teachers and administrators have skills and commitment to teach bilingual, migrant, and Native American students.

THE PROBLEM

Providing an effective educational program for Native American, migrant, and Hispanic students requires special instructional skills that help to level the playing field for children from cultural and linguistic minority groups. While there is agreement that the region's schools need to make special provisions for these students, there is not a consensus on what skills school staff need to assure that Native American and Hispanic students are not penalized for being different.

Informants listed many different skills, knowledge and attitudes of effective school staff for Hispanic and Native American students. These are staff who:

- Speak Spanish.
- Are able to use ESL techniques.
- Have the skills and comfort level needed to work with students from dysfunctional families.
- Are able to adapt to a wide range of students in a single classroom.
- Possess skills in adapting curricula for lower performers.
- Know how to promote parent collaboration, volunteerism, community organization.
- Are skilled at using motivational techniques.
- Are aware of cultural ways.
- Have compassion and understanding for their students.
- Understand the Indian sense of history, time and motivation.
- Rely on positive attitudes rather than negative racial stereotypes.
- Understand the nature of second-language learning and the needs of second-language learners.
- Understand students' social and emotional needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers need to possess a certain set of skills and knowledge as well as positive attitudes toward minority students.

Our informants had a broad vision of teacher training needs that encompassed skills, knowledge and attitudes. They told us that appreciation of students' culture and the influence of culture on learning is not enough. Special teaching methods and fundamental understandings of the learning process (e.g., second-language acquisition) are also required.

While skills development and attitudes were both identified as areas of need, training that is skills oriented seemed to be preferred to training that attempts to change attitudes. For example, one district presented skills-oriented inservice training aimed at addressing different "learning styles." Another district provided skills in adapting curricula for lower performers.

For the sake of discussion, we can certainly look at skills, knowledge, and attitudes as being separate and different.

However, in reality, they are inextricably linked. The dilemma for many schools is whether they can build skills without changing attitudes.

Training for staff will not be successful if a "top-down" approach is used. Front-line school staff who will be receiving the training need to be invested in the process so that they see the rationale for change and training:

> ***"Three years ago, we had a top-down implementation, and we had a rebellion. I had teachers at the door blocking entry to trainers saying, 'I don't have to let you in.' There's no effective change unless the teachers are invested in the change."***
>
> ***Administrator, bilingual program***

Special skills for the regular classroom staff working with bilingual students. At the top of the needs list in all of the districts we surveyed were specific skills and understandings for regular classroom teachers who work with bilingual children:

- Recognition of the importance of using Spanish for teaching concepts to Spanish-dominant children.
- Understanding of the transition children go through when learning a second language, e.g., delays in both languages may occur during the transition process.
- Skills in the use of specific ESL techniques, e.g., sheltered English.

When teachers do not have skills and knowledge that will support their bilingual students, they develop unrealistic expectations. The teacher may expect students to participate in the regular curriculum without support or adaptations. Students may also be expected to do the same work, in English, that is required of English-speaking students.

Simple adaptations that involve parents can also be made in the regular classroom. For example, one teacher has her bilingual students read to their parents in English and Spanish. This helps the Spanish-speaking parents evaluate their child's progress in school. It is also very encouraging for children.

Paraprofessionals, particularly since they carry the major teaching responsibility for bilingual students in many schools, also need training. They expressed needs for training in preparing lesson plans and new teaching techniques:

> ***"I'd like to better myself in techniques. There's no inservicing here. The majority of the inservices here are for the teachers, and we listen, but most of it doesn't pertain to us. We're not given the time to go."***
>
> ***Bilingual paraprofessional***

New policies in many secondary schools that provide greater academic opportunities for bilingual students will strain teachers who are not trained to work with non-English speakers. Paraprofessionals provide students instructional support which goes beyond mere translation. But the "start-up" time can be difficult because most training for paraprofessionals in this role occurs after the paraprofessional assignment is made.

Special skills for regular classroom staff working with Native American students. The need for positive staff attitudes and increased knowledge were identified most frequently in our interviews with Native Americans. The ideal teacher has:

> ***"...the appreciation, and the love and concern. They take the extra time to sit down with the child, and make sure they're all caught up on their work. They take the extra effort on their break time, their lunch time. They make sure the student understands what they're doing."***
>
> ***Native American teacher***

The teacher understands what students' home situations are like, and makes accommodations:

> ***"So the teacher sends a worksheet home, but there's nobody there to help the child. There's no room for them to study. The teachers have to be realistic and say, 'Well, it's not going to get done at home, so I've got to help them here.' If you can put that extra time and effort here in the building then it will work."***
>
> ***Native American teacher***

Many informants did, however, point out that the absence of obvious language problems (e.g., dominance) can work against Native American children. Students with subtle linguistic differences and significant language delays which hinder school success may not receive special supports. The importance of teacher skills in dealing with these students—knowledge of general language development and the nature and effects of linguistic differences—can be underestimated or overlooked.

Particular traits that were felt to characterize the ideal teacher for Native American students were:

- Patience and understanding to work with students who are often very shy and introverted, unaccustomed to expressing their feelings.
- Training in how to work with underprivileged and slow students.
- Understanding that many Native American students have had a slow start, and have missed more school than other students.
- Understanding that Native American students use language in a different way.
- Understanding of Native American history and culture:

> *"We still have people here thinking Indians live in tepees, that they're primitive. The teachers need to know we're not like that. Just some general knowledge. I think that would help a lot."*
>
> *Native American parent*

School staff and administrators know and use, at a minimum, basic survival Spanish.

Requiring school staff to learn Spanish is a controversial topic in the Yakima Valley. As it stands, Spanish-speaking professional staff are in the minority, even in districts where Spanish-speaking students comprise as much as 25 percent of the enrollment. Attempts in the past to encourage staff to learn Spanish have been met with resistance and, in one district, a huge backlash. Perhaps racial prejudice is so strong that speaking Spanish creates an association with a lower strata of people:

> *"By being bilingual, that really does offend some people, I have to make that really clear. When we do a program with a translator it takes twice as long, and I see people in the audience are twitching in the background when I'm speaking Spanish."*
>
> *Elementary principal*

Informants suggested that for school staff to learn even a little bit of Spanish would go a long way toward increasing the comfort level of Hispanic students:

> *"Some of the teachers were telling me, 'I can't even get them to write their name.' Well, if you say, 'Write your name! Write your name!' to a Spanish-speaking child ... it could be chicken for all he knows. 'Escribe tu nombre.' That's it. It's that simple."*
>
> *Elementary teacher*

Perhaps teachers who try to use a few words would have more empathy with the students, and students might feel more comfortable taking the risk of talking and answering questions in those classes where teachers take the same risks.

For those staff seeking Spanish instruction, there appeared to be few resources in the community. Yakima Valley Community College offers some classes. In this community, with an already large and likely increasing Hispanic presence, many informants were concerned that school staff made so little effort to learn at least a little of the language.

Teachers need special training in order to be effective with bilingual and Native American students.

Teachers come to the region's schools with little or no specific preparation in working with Native Americans or students with limited English proficiency. Teacher training programs do not prepare regular classroom teachers for the diverse population of students in today's schools. For example, a course in second-language acquisition is not required for teacher certification in Washington unless the teaching candidate is seeking an ESL or bilingual endorsement. Further, there are few resources in the region's universities to offer these classes:

> *"I doubt there are too many places around the state that can rely on any of the traditionally Anglo-trained teachers to meet their district needs. I know the big cities can't. And Central Washington can't."*
> *Administrator, bilingual program*

Teachers who serve in bilingual or ESL programs are required by the state to have a special endorsement. However, our informants felt that even the programs leading to endorsement offered by the state's colleges offer "irrelevant" instruction. Major universities that offer specialized programs are too far away for Yakima teachers to take advantage of. Many informants looked with hope to the locally based Heritage College which is developing strong programs and faculty in bilingual education and ESL.

All school staff, up and down the line—from administrators to building staff—are committed to school success for Hispanic and Native American students.

A fundamental commitment to success for all students drives the development of a staff that is highly skilled in providing specialized educational services for minority students. This broad commitment has important implications for staff development:

- Availability of inservice training opportunities that build staff skills and knowledge, as well as positive attitudes for teaching Native American and Hispanic students.
- Teacher and staff interest in rather than resistance to inservice training that is designed to improve instruction and promote a positive environment for minority students.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL CONDITIONS

The study focussed on five school districts in the Yakima Valley that were selected by a local advisory board. Although the districts are not identified by name in the study, we want to provide the reader with information on the local conditions we observed and learned about in our interviews and observations.

The following profiles summarize the various bits of background information that informants shared with us about most of the districts and the region. We share these with the reader as a background against which to understand our findings.

The Native American Population.

The districts in the sample are located on or near the Yakima Indian Reservation. The Native American students in the districts include Yakima, as well as students from many other tribes. Whenever a reservation is located near a urban center, like Yakima, mobile Indians will come to the area seeking work and seeking to be near to a major cultural center like the reservation. Some Native Americans come to the area because they have been transferred to Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) jobs on the reservation.

Because some Native American students are very mobile, moving among extended family members, they may be enrolled in several districts in the area over the course of a school year.

The Migrant Population.

Since 1980, there has been a huge increase in the number of monolingual Mexican migrant families. One informant, a long-time resident, recalled that in the mid-1970s, Grandview had only one monolingual Mexican family: "They were welcomed with open arms. They were unique and everybody bent over backwards to help them."

Now there is extensive stratification among the Hispanic community. The culture differs from one generation to the next. Another factor that contributes to the diversity of the community is the fact that families come from different regions of Mexico, or Central or South America. Individuals from urban areas may have university degrees. Students from Mexican schools are often accustomed to an educational system that demands high standards of excellence. Individuals from rural areas may have little or no education.

In the recent past, families from Mexico would often migrate in groups of male extended family members, including young men and their uncles. More recently, Mexican males who have been coming up to work for 10 or 15 years and who now have amnesty are bringing up their children from Mexico. What most often happens is that the fathers bring their older sons first, and those under 16 may find themselves in school for the first time in their lives.

There have also been changes in who works in the fields. Even 15 years ago, informants describe a mix of youth who "cut grass":

> ***"White, Mexican—all of you got up in the morning to cut asparagus. It was just accepted. And now only certain people are cutting grass, and other people would never do that sort of thing."***
> ***Community agency staff***

In the recent past, communities in the lower valley were more economically and socially uniform. Now there is greater economic and social diversity. Economic conditions encourage people to remain on welfare because low-paying jobs do not cover the cost of raising a family, particularly health benefits. In the past, farmers used to provide workers with housing, whereas today farm workers who come in the summer to harvest have to put up in motels when the rates are high.

The major problem that these changes in migration patterns create for the schools is how to serve the newly arriving monolingual students from Mexico who have no previous school experience. The influx of large numbers of migrant families in the lower valley overloads the home visitors in the districts, who are the front-line workers dealing with the multiple problems these families face. The migrant education staff value their positive relationships with new migrant families, and speak with admiration of the families' industriousness, their hopes for their children, their motivation to learn English. But staff face more family needs than they can meet during their work days.

Although the proportion of bilingual/bicultural school staff has been increasing in the region, there are still shortages. One factor is that minority professionals can obtain better-paying jobs in other fields. More and more businesses in the lower valley are hiring Mexican-American staff. Some are bilingual. Businesses see the benefits of catering to the increasing Mexican-American population:

> *"We're not out here to make a social comment. We're a grocery store. We're not opening the floodgates to ruin and damnation by allowing these people to shop here. We're just increasing our profit margin by making this place accessible to them."*
>
> *Community agency staff*

Mt. Adams School District

Demographics. Mt. Adams is a district of about 1,100 students, located on the Yakima Indian Reservation. The district has a split campus. The elementary school is located in Harrah, and the high school, middle school, and administrative office are located in White Swan, about 10 miles away. One informant observed that this arrangement made the school nurse's job more difficult because it adds commuting time on top of meeting the many health needs of students in the district.

The district population has changed significantly over the past 15 years, growing from about 600 to 1,100 students, and changing from about 70 percent Anglo to about 70 percent Indian. The migrant population has also increased to about 15 percent, the result of more migrant families settling out in the district, part of the trend across the valley, and partly the result of new orchards being built in the area. The Native American population increase is partly the result of students coming from other districts on the district's eastern borders. Some informants believe that Native Americans are being pushed west by the Hispanic/migrant migration into the valley.

Most of the new settlers in the district live near Harrah, due to the serious housing shortage in White Swan. The housing shortage also affects the sense of community among school staff. Many teachers in the district commute to work from the Yakima area or from more distant rural areas, driving up to an hour each way to and from work. One informant said that when staff tried to schedule Spanish language lessons for staff, teachers' commuting schedules interfered. The fact that many teachers do not live in the district may contribute to the feeling among some parents that some teachers are there "just for the job." In a small district like Mt. Adams, a housing shortage also compounds the difficulty of transition planning for students with disabilities.

One result of the migrant influx is some conflict in the community regarding the resource needs of these students—for example, why they need bilingual education. More recently, informants report some fighting between Native American and Spanish speaking teens. However, informants described the Anglo, Native American, and Hispanic populations as working together cooperatively in the community.

Mt. Adams is a poor community. Informants spoke of students who come to school hungry, and there is now a breakfast program at the high school. The district differs from the others in the study in that there is no obvious upper class of landowners or professionals.

The employment picture in the district is bleak. There are no job opportunities for high school students in the area, and local job prospects for graduates are also slim. Agriculture in the area has declined, and logging jobs, once abundant, are few.

The district enjoys a supportive relationship with the Yakima Indian Nation. The tribe places a high priority on education and is a major source of scholarship money for students. This year, for example, the tribe provided about $30,000 in student scholarships. The tribe provides the district with materials and services and sponsors programs throughout the year. The district and the tribe are currently working together on a long-range plan for training and employment by establishing fisheries and wildlife programs for students. The school will provide work training for jobs in the community. District-tribal collaboration is enhanced by the fact that the district superintendent is a member of the Yakima Nation, and the assistant superintendent is also Native American.

Students and families in the Mt. Adams school district have only two community resources—the school and the churches. This has advantages and disadvantages. It makes the school the focus of the community. Sports events are the local entertainment and they bring out the entire community. It means the district is so far removed that it can't expect help from the outside. The district can be more easily ignored and looked down upon by more resource-rich districts. It creates difficult transportation problems for families, getting students to and from activities when many parents can't afford to chauffeur their children. The district's location also insulates it from many of the more serious problems that neighboring districts have. It makes the students a captive audience—perhaps more receptive to the school than students in urban districts with more alternatives. Finally, the district's isolation requires the district to become self reliant in order to get things done. This means that the local residents must take the direction and do the work themselves. Some community leaders regard this situation as the source of the community's potential.

Yakima School District

Demographics. The Yakima community is one of rapidly changing demographics. Changes include increasing poverty and social problems such as drug dealing and gangs, and a shrinking middle class. The influx of new families, many of them Hispanic, into the community has created a city that is having to redefine itself. One fact that most informants emphasized is that Yakima is a divided city—they describe the east-side/west-side split as pervasive.

A number of informants described Yakima as being a racist city. The consensus seemed to be that racism may not be as dramatic as the media portrays it at times, but it is insidious. One informant described the community attitude as more accepting of minorities than in the past, but not more comfortable. She felt that the community has had to accept the fact of the minorities being there, but it does not have to make them feel welcome or comfortable. Advocates for Hispanic and Native American students felt that their students and programs were not regarded by the administration as seriously as Anglo students and programs.

The district, facing the threat of a segregation charge due to the concentration of minority students in the east-side schools, has initiated bussing and is hopeful that its new magnet schools will help desegregate its schools. Informants described the district's bussing of students from the east side to the west side. One east-side parent felt that her child was being treated differently on the west side—the west-side teacher referred to the east-side students as "poor kids." This mother moved her daughter back to her east-side school. There are few role models for minority students in the west-side schools. One informant suggested that teachers in the district be rotated from east- to west-side, or that teachers as well as students be bussed across town. Other informants cited the need to prepare school staff for changing student populations.

One informant observed that the district's efforts to desegregate appear to have preceded efforts to increase staff sensitivity and multicultural awareness. The consequence is that children become victims of district policy. According to one informant, placing a migrant student in certain classrooms would be the equivalent of "booking passage on the Titanic." There are teachers who lack "initial sensitivity" to student needs, and classrooms where migrant students would "feel like lepers." Another informant recommended that staff be prepared for new student groups and be helped to understand that students will have different needs. Another informant saw a need to train administrators to work with minorities, as these staff have a strong influence on building attitudes. There was the feeling that the district is not serious about improving conditions until staff are required to change their attitudes and skills.

The district implemented magnet schools in 1991-92 in point to encourage integration of west-side schools. Informants described several problems with the magnets. One informant pointed out that spaces are not specifically allocated for Native American students in the magnet programs, although spaces are allocated for Hispanic and Caucasian students. According to this informant, Native American parents were not informed about the magnet schools—parents had to contact the school staff to get information. Another informant observed that most of the movement in the first year of the magnets was from east to west, raising the concern that the magnets are creaming the best Hispanic and black students from the east-side schools. This informant also felt that west-side parents will not send their children to east side schools until those schools are remodeled or replaced and perceived as safe places.

Some schools that formerly served primarily Anglo students have seen their neighborhoods change, and are beginning to serve growing numbers of Hispanic students. In some cases, the staff in these buildings have resisted, or are having difficulty adjusting to the needs of these students. In some schools, staff described outright hostility to minority students. In other schools that are adjusting to an increasing minority population, the principals have made it clear that the schools will be accessible to these families.

The city has a serious housing shortage that has second-order effects on the schools. Landlords have divided many single family homes into rentals for several families. These properties have not been re-zoned, and consequently the city's property tax base does not match up with school needs for increasing student populations.

The school district serves a large low-income population. Of the district's 13 elementary schools, 10 or 11 schools qualify for Chapter programs. Yakima has several large transient populations. Most visible in this study is the migrant population. In addition, there is a large transient Anglo population—workers in the food industries and retail who get transferred to the area and then moved to Spokane or Seattle. Many of these workers return to the area when they retire. According to one informant, this contributes to the city's skewed age distribution, with large populations of children under 18 and adults over 60. It also results in a skewed income distribution--with children and minority populations low-income, and older retirees higher income. The city lacks a large middle-income population to anchor it and support the schools.

Migrant and bilingual students. Yakima School District serves more migrant students and more bilingual students than any other district in the state, except for Seattle. More farmworkers are settling out in Yakima and commuting to the fields in Harrah, Zillah, and other agricultural communities. Other newly-arrived migrants are settling in the city. For example, the district serves a group of about 40 students who are Oaxacans, full-blooded Indians from Mexico. These families experience a great deal of prejudice from the established Hispanic population. There are very distinct groups of Spanish speaking residents in the city. The Hispanic population that has been in the city for 30-40 years, for example, is very assimilated. Informants say these settled-out families feel they have little in common with the new residents.

For migrant families, living arrangements have an impact on the services their children can access in the schools. One informant observed that the students from families who are settling in Yakima and commuting to the fields no longer qualify for migrant education funds, although they have the same problems as the Class I and II migrants. Another informant spoke of families who "worked" the system and moved their families for brief periods to work in other districts in order to remain eligible for migrant services.

In 1992, the district enrolled 2,565 migrant students and 2,003 bilingual students: 74% of the district's students who are migrant are also bilingual. Ten years ago, the district served 800 migrant students. The district currently serves 1,300 migrant students. Service is based on need, and Class I and II migrants are served before the settled-out migrants.

Migrant students are served primarily in schools on the east side of the city, although in 1991-92 migrant education services were introduced in three west-side schools, with three more planned to be added in 1992-93. Migrant students have a major effect on the schools. In one middle school with a population of about 500, over 900 students were served—"turnover is vast." As one informant observed, the concept of migrant education has been developing in the state over the past 20 years. Many staff in the Yakima area have contributed to that state vision. Migrant program staff speak of their commitment to creating a community of Yakima that includes Hispanics in positions of leadership.

Informants praised the district's very committed staff, and the fact that many of the most talented teachers and staff are located in the most heavily non-Anglo schools and classrooms. The relocation of Migrant Education, Indian Education, and Student Services staff offices into the same office building is perceived as a positive move towards communication and cooperation.

Native American students. There are about 300 Native American students (2 percent) in the Yakima School District. These students come from many different tribes, including Eskimo, Aleut, Lummi, Blackfoot, Navajo, Crow, Chippewa, Lakota, and Yakima. Students from the nearby Yakima reservation are actually in the minority. Within these tribal affiliations, students vary from full-blood to quarter-blood, and from closely affiliated with their tribe to quite assimilated into the majority culture.

Native American students in the district are a minority within a minority. They differ greatly in their world views, social activities, ceremonies, and cultures. There is no immediate sense of community they share. The students are scattered in schools across the district. The results are that:

- Indian Education staff have transportation barriers in getting the students together for club meetings and other activities.
- Parents are scattered and not well organized.
- Students experience school rivalries.
- Advocates have difficulty organizing support and action on behalf of students.

Local Conditions—The Lower Valley

The community climate. There have been significant demographic changes over the past 10 years in Yakima's rural lower valley. The number of Spanish-speaking migrant families has grown rapidly, shifting the racial balance in many lower valley towns. The Yakima Indian Reservation is located in the lower valley and accounts for a stable and sizable Native American population.

Hispanic and Native Americans significantly outnumber the Anglo population. The once-dominant Anglo population—described as "conservative and hard-working"—is now in the minority. In Toppenish, for example, the community is now 60 percent Hispanic, 20 percent Native American, and 20 percent Anglo. In Wapato, the Hispanic population has increased, the Anglo population has decreased, and the number of Native Americans has remained the same.

Racial tensions have been present in the area for some time. Recent racial incidents in the area have been reported on national news. Many residents, however, feel that these incidents have been blown out of proportion. Gang warfare and other racial unrest reached a crisis level a number of years ago, but a number of informants told us that gangs are not the problem they once were. Nonetheless, we were told about continuing efforts to keep gangs at bay and out of the schools and community.

School board and community leadership continues to be dominated by the Anglo minority. There is concern that members of minority communities are denied access to power and that their needs are put aside in favor of the interests of the Anglo majority. Not long ago, a superintendent who was supportive of minority interests was removed and replaced by a more conservative outsider.

Most of the towns in the lower Yakima Valley were described as poor and economically stressed. People were characterized as "struggling to survive." In Wapato, 80 percent of the students are eligible for free lunch. Breakfast programs are available in many schools because children come to school hungry.

The number of migrant families in each of the communities in the lower valley varies, as does the degree of migrancy among those families. In order to qualify for migrant services, a family must move once every five years. Different levels of migrancy are defined by how frequently a family moves, how far they move (interstate, intrastate) and the type of industry (agriculture, fishing). The majority of migrant workers in the region are agricultural workers of Mexican descent. However, there are some Native American migrant workers involved in seasonal fishing.

The amount of agricultural work in the area is decreasing, resulting in an increase in the number of settled-out Mexican families, those families that take up permanent residence. Many families use towns in the lower valley as a home base from which they travel to other parts of Washington and to other states to find agricultural work. In Grandview, where the number of settled-out families is fairly high, about 40 percent of the migrant families move within Washington or out of state (at least once every five years). The remaining 60 percent of Grandview's migrant families have not moved their permanent residence for five years. Other towns in the lower valley (e.g., Mabton, Sunnyside) have much higher numbers of migrant families that have not settled out.

History and informants both suggest that Hispanic families are "here to stay." Immigration laws have made it possible for formerly migratory workers from outside the United States to bring their families into the U.S. and establish citizenship. They are taking up permanent residence in the Yakima Valley and are not likely to return to their countries of origin.

Characteristics of the school population. In the 1990s, the schools are facing new challenges in serving bilingual, Spanish-speaking students, who comprise 99 percent of bilingual students. The number of Spanish-speaking students is on the rise. Over the last 10 years, Toppenish has seen a 400 percent increase in the number of identified Spanish-speaking students—partly as a result of improved identification efforts, but mostly due to movement of Mexican families into the area. Grandview has seen less but still significant growth during the same time period: Spanish-speaking students have increased from 33 percent to 70 percent in 10 years.

There has been a startling increase in the number of non-English-speaking students in both elementary and high school grades. This poses a particular problem in the high schools, where basic skills and ESL programs have been less well developed than in the elementary schools. High schools are struggling to provide appropriate programs for students who have never attended school and are not literate in their own language.

Dropout rates in the area are very high. Wapato High School figures show a dropout rate of 10-15% per class in any given year. This figure is inflated because it does not account for students who leave Wapato and enroll in another high school. High turnover rates and enrollment changes make it difficult for high schools to keep track of dropout rates and students.

While actual migrancy—frequent family moves to follow crops—may be on the decrease, winter travel to Mexico for many families is still an important part of the yearly cycle. School staff expressed concern:

> ***"I don't know when we are going to catch up, and how we're going to catch up, and how we're going to continue to meet the needs of these students."***
>
> ***Elementary teacher***

While Hispanic families are living throughout the lower valley, Native American students are clustered in the districts closest to the reservation. These include Mt. Adams, Wapato, Goldendale, and Toppenish. Characteristics of Native American students are discussed in detail in Chapter 8, Programs for Native American Students.

APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND OF INDIAN EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Specialized programs for Native American education have a long history in federal policy. In efforts to acculturate Native Americans, the U.S. government initiated the widespread use of boarding schools throughout the country during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of the Yakimas we interviewed had living grandparents who had experienced boarding schools:

> ***"Consider what it would be like for your parents had they been taken away from their families. They were told, 'You can't speak your language. You can't dress like your culture dresses.' Immediately your extended family is split. Your brothers and sisters are dispersed and you can't see each other anymore. Consider how angry and hostile and defensive you might be."***
>
> ***Elementary principal***

The approach of removing Indian children from their families was abandoned long ago. Now, as in Yakima, the majority of Indian children are educated in public schools.

Special federal funding is available to support specialized services for Native American students. These include Johnson-O'Malley and Title V. In addition, "874" funds are distributed to districts whose taxable land base is reduced due to the presence of reservation land. While Johnson-O'Malley and Title V go to support special programs (counselling, tutoring, language classes), the 874 funds are most frequently used to cover basic operating costs.

The Yakima Indian Nation collects per-capita Johnson-O'Malley funds directly from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) which it then distributes, on a contractual basis, to districts that serve Yakima children. This is in contrast to smaller tribes in the state which use the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction as an administrative conduit for Johnson-O'Malley funds.

The Yakima Indian Nation's contractual relationship with school districts gives parents and the tribe a greater voice in how Johnson-O'Malley funds are spent. In districts with large numbers of Indian children, the Johnson-O'Malley funds amount to a significant resource over which Indian Education Committees, made up of parents, have control.

Urban districts have more difficulty applying for Johnson-O'Malley and Title V funds because they lack the proximity to the reservations that ease the verification of students' tribal enrollments. Districts that are close to the reservation can more easily coordinate enrollment verification with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office or the tribe. Verification is a complex process requiring knowledge of federal and tribal laws, and coordination between tribes and Indian agencies.

In districts that do not adjoin reservations, however, Indian students may come from many different often distant tribes with which the district has no ongoing relationship. This penalizes Indian students in urban districts—they may already be more underserved than other minority students, yet it's harder for the district to get extra monies to serve them.

Other federal and state programs are available to support services for all children with academic delays, including Native American children. These funds are over and above basic education funds provided by the state. These include: Chapter 1, the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), and special education.

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

Wapato School District

Javier Aguirre, *bilingual tutor*
Lila Barnett, *elementary vice-principal*
Connie Collins, *counselor, middle school*
Rick Foss, *administrative assistant, federal programs*
George Juarez, *secondary vice-principal*
Kathy Levell, *special education director*
Rosa Morales, *elementary teacher*
Mary O'Dell, *bilingual program coordinator*
Helen Olney-Brown, *Head Start coordinator, Indian education committee chair*
Harold Ott, *superintendent*
Sue Rigdon, *Indian Education program counselor*
Merrill Sepulveda, *bilingual tutor*
Leroy Werkhoven, *secondary principal*
Isabel Yallup, *Indian education program counselor*

Toppenish School District

Grace Aguirre, *special education paraprofessional*
Rosa Alaniz, *records clerk*
Esperanza Anaya, *MSRTS home visitor*
Don Bender, *Title VII grant coordinator*
Fred Diaz, *middle school principal*
Jan Esquivel, *elementary principal*
Eron Maltos, *special education psychologist/counselor*
Jackie Mault, *special education coordinator*
Ida Jo Pinkham, *Indian education committee chair*
Gail Puryear, *special education director, elementary principal*
Irene Sumner, *Indian education program home visitor*
Lisa Tahkeal, *elementary teacher*
Margarita Tobias, *elementary teacher*
Roberto Alaniz, *migrant PAC president*
Mr. Morfin, *bilingual PAC vice-president*
Julio Romero, *bilingual PAC president*
Lidia Romero, *parent of bilingual students*

Grandview School District

Ernie Fisher, *federal programs director*
Monte Haag, *elementary principal*
John Jennings, *case manager*
Becky Knott, *elementary teacher*
Yolanda Maganas, *home visitor*

Yakima School District
Mateo Arteaga, *middle school principal*
Lisa Baker, *Indian education staff*
Monnie Bellrock, *elementary teacher*
Jessie Calks, *principal of alternative school*
Wes Crago, *director of alternative school*
Juan Garcia, *migrant/bilingual PAC president*
Irene Gonzalez, *elementary principal*
Gail Hanninen, *director of student and academic services*
Rafael Hernandez, *migrant/bilingual PAC vice-president*
Hans Landig, *director of special education services*
Jule LeBeau, *elementary teacher*
Esperanza Lemos, *elementary principal*
Mariah Lowells, *Indian education staff*
Frances Macias, *migrant home visitor*
Felix Martinez, *elementary principal*
Linda Lou Montalvo, *itinerant bilingual teacher*
Frank Naasz, *acting director, categorical programs*
Guillermo Nunez, *paraprofessional*
Juana Rezaie, *bilingual special education teacher*
Jim Rigney, *high school migrant/bilingual counselor*
Mr. Guilbert Rodriguez, *Chapter 1/LAP PAC co-president*
Mrs. Guilbert Rodriguez, *Chapter 1/LAP PAC co-president*
Ignatio Romero, *migrant home visitor*
Dale Toland, *elementary principal*
Alice Villanueva, *middle school teacher*
Lee West, *principal of migrant alternative school*
Terry Winet, *migrant/bilingual teacher/counselor*

Mt. Adams School District
Valerie Calac, *parent*
Eleanor Davis, *parent*
Don Devon, high *school counselor*
Karen Hollenbeck, *special education director*
Jennie Honanie, *elementary teacher*
Joe Hoptowit, *superintendent*
Aaron Louis, *administrative assistant*
Dave Juarez, *bilingual elementary teacher*
Frank Mesplie, *high school teacher*
Cynthia Oldperson, *parent*
Mrs. Pastrana, *parent*
Mr. Raulston, *bilingual high school teacher*
Kay Riel, *school board member, parent*
Jenny Siaz, *bilingual aide*
Beverly Adams Strong, *parent*

Non-District Informants

Patricia Belter, *special services director, Yakima Tribal Head Start*
Ray Cerrillo, *director, Migrant Child Institute*
Carol Cropley, *handicapped preschool specialist, ESD 105*
Norberto Spindola, *director of family literacy project, Washington State Migrant Council*
Dr. Gargas, *pediatrician, Toppenish Farmworkers Clinic*
Jessie Garza, *dropout prevention program, Toppenish Farmworkers Clinic*
Patsy Martin, *Indian education supervisor, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*
Carlos Maya, *recruiter/coordinator, Migrant Student Records Transfer System*
Genoveva Morales, *Migrant Head Start director*
Irma Jimenez-Prieto, *parent trainer, Migrant Education Regional Office*
Linda Roberts, *recruiter/coordinator, Migrant Student Records Transfer System*
Philomena Saluskin, *Head Start director, Yakima Tribal Program*
Alvin Schuster, *Johnson-O'Malley home liaison, Yakima Nation*
Vicky Yvarra, *medical case worker, Toppenish Farmworkers Clinic*

GLOSSARY

BIA: Bureau of Indian Affairs. A federal agency within the U.S. Department of Interior with responsibility for providing federal services to federally recognized Indian tribes and Alaskan Natives.

career ladder: Refers to a coordinated system of teacher training that is incremental, allowing individuals to progress from instructional assistant to certified teacher.

Chapter 1: The major federal compensatory education program targeting low-achieving students in elementary and secondary grades in higher-than-average poverty schools. Local Chapter I programs provide students with intense instruction in basic skills.

COE (Certificate of Eligibility): Form which certifies that a child is eligible to be served in the Migrant Education Program and is used to generate federal funds.

874: Refers to a federal program of educational "impact aid" for areas where the taxable land base is reduced due to the presence of non-taxable land, e.g., Indian reservations, military reservations.

ESL (English as Second Language): Special instruction developed specifically to teach English as a second language. ESL instruction can include vocabulary development, grammar and syntax, content instruction, and survival skills for the regular classroom, as well as reading and writing in English.

FAE (Fetal Alcohol Effects): Alcohol-related birth defects that are not as fully exhibited as FAS (see below).

FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome): A combination of physical and mental birth defects that may develop when expectant mothers drink excessive amounts of alcohol during pregnancy.

GED: General education degree.

Hispanic: "A person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin—regardless of race" (Office of Civil Rights).

IEP (Individualized Educational Program): A statement of goals and objectives, required by law, for a child being served in a special educational program.

informants: Key individuals who participate in in-depth interviews that form the data base for a qualitative research study.

JOM (Johnson O'Malley) Act: Federal legislation that provides funds on a per-capita basis to support Indian Education programs in schools that reside on or near Indian reservations to serve qualified Indian students.

language dominance: Refers to the identification of the language in which a bilingual person shows the greatest proficiency.

LAP (Learning Assistance Program): State counterpart to the Chapter I program that provides state funds to serve students academically at risk.

LEP (Limited English Proficient): Refers to a student whose native language is other than English and whose skills in listening to, speaking, reading or writing English are such that he/she derives little benefit from school instruction in English.

migrant status classification: Children are categorized under the federal regulations governing state education programs for migrant students:

Class I	Agricultural interstate migrant
Class II	Agricultural intrastate migrant
Class III	Agricultural 5-year migrant
Class IV	Interstate migratory fisherman
Class V	Intrastate migratory fisherman
Class VI	5-year migratory fisherman

MSRTS (Migrant Student Record Transfer System): National computer-supported student tracking system based in Little Rock, Arkansas, designed to expedite the transfer of student school records to provide continuity in education and health care for children of migrant laborers.

PAC (Parent Advisory Committee): Advisory groups required by legislation for migrant, bilingual, and Indian Education programs. All districts that receive federal funds under these programs must set up a PAC which must meet a certain minimum number of times per year. PACs must be composed of parents eligible to be served by the program. Members assist the district in planning, implementing and evaluating the local services.

paraprofessional (parapro): Non-certificated instructional staff who provide support to classroom teachers.

settled-out: Describes the residential status of migrant agricultural families that have established permanent residency.

Sahaptian: The indigenous language of the Yakima Indians and neighboring tribes in eastern Washington, Idaho, and Oregon.

Submersion (approach to teaching English to LEP students): Language-minority students are placed in ordinary mainstream classrooms where only English is spoken. Students study the regular curriculum and are expected to perform as best they can.

Title V: Title V of the Indian Education Act, which provides federal discretionary funds for special programs serving Indian children.

Total Physical Response (TPR): A specific method for teaching a second language that uses teacher commands and physical movement by students ("Stand up," "Bring me the book") to teach survival proficiency in the new language.

Transitional Bilingual Programs: Language-minority students study subject matter in their primary language and English until they have learned enough English to succeed in English-only mainstream classrooms.

Yakima Indian Nation: A federation of 14 Indian tribes and bands in Eastern Washington and Oregon, created by treaty in 1855.

REVIEWERS' COMMENTS

In August, 1992, we asked our Advisory Board members and other district representatives to review a draft of the study findings. We responded to most of the reviewers' very specific comments with minor revisions and edits.

Because one of our reviewers responded with more extensive and helpful clarifications of several sections of the report, we want to share these comments with our readers.

Reviewer's comments from:	Dr. Hans J. Landig Director of Elementary Education Curriculum and Instruction Yakima Public Schools

"School-Community Partnership and/or Dropout Prevention

More intensive efforts need to be made to take the "school" to the student when the student is not able or willing to come to the school. In a temporal sense, Yakima has provided night school for migrant and Spanish language populations for a number of years. In a physical sense, the district is utilizing office space in the Yakima Mall.

Bilingual/bicultural issues (also see below)

Bilingualism/biculturalism is treated as an add-on to the Anglo culture, i.e., we provide bilingual education until the students have developed sufficient English. If we are really serious about valuing Native American or Hispanic culture, bilingualism needs to be a two-way street. How many programs in the valley are truly "bilingual," aiming to foster competence in two languages? Yakima School District is just beginning to look at that issue in the context of some of our magnets.

Special Education

You cited Diana vs. State Board of Education (prohibiting IQ tests for non-white children to determine eligibility for special education). This was an out-of-court settlement in a District Court in California in 1970 not legally binding on the State of Washington (C70-37RFP US District Court Northern California). Several Spanish-language versions of IQ tests are used to some extent in the Yakima Valley with Hispanic students. Non-English translations or re-standardizations of IQ tests were not available at the time of the 1970 California case. A *broader* case can be made against the use of IQ tests with our non-Anglo population in the Yakima Valley (and probably with respect to a large segment of the Anglo population, also):

- Even when Spanish language translations of IQ tests are available they mostly represent a translation of a test developed originally in English, thus containing both cultural and linguistic/cognitive items which are either irrelevant or which are placed-out of their developmental sequence once translated into another language. This leads to artificially low estimates of intelligence.

- A few Spanish language versions might actually have been redeveloped and re-standardized with Spanish speaking populations. An example of this is a version of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised, developed and standardized on children in Mexico City, D.F. Several of us in the Yakima School District were trained on this version by one of its developers. Here, too, are problems. Many of the families of Spanish-speaking children in the Yakima Valley either grew up in California, Texas, or more likely in the Yakima area. If they came to this country recently, they did not come from the Mexico City area, but from Mexico's northern provinces, such as Michoacan. Michoacan, like much of the Hispanic communities in California, Texas and Washington is primarily a poverty culture, and these children are thus very different from the average child attending school in Mexico city. Such a standardization is not representative of the children attending our schools in this valley, and the use of such a test would likely presume knowledge these children have never experienced, again resulting in lower scores.

- Many of our minority children (and many of our Anglo children) are for all practical purposes "alingual," i.e., they do not possess any competence and depth of structure in any language. These children will have developed surface language to get by in most social situations, but are not able to process meaning, inferences, etc. in either English or Spanish (or whatever language). This may result if children start out in one language and are switched to another prior to developing a competency in their first tongue on which they can build. An IQ test in this situation will invariably result in test scores placing the child solidly in the mildly retarded range with somewhat, but often not significantly higher scores in so-called non-verbal areas.

These issues are matters directly related to some of the conclusions in Diana vs. State Board of Education, which have not really been fully addressed outside of California in any formal way.

Magnet Program in Yakima Public Schools

With reference to magnet programs, their intent is broader than to just integrate west side schools, although that is one of the hoped-for outcomes. The basic intent is to allow more choices for educational options for all students based on their interests and thus improve instructional outcomes. Because of that, magnets have been initiated not just in schools which are racially imbalanced but also in schools which represent the racial make up of the community."

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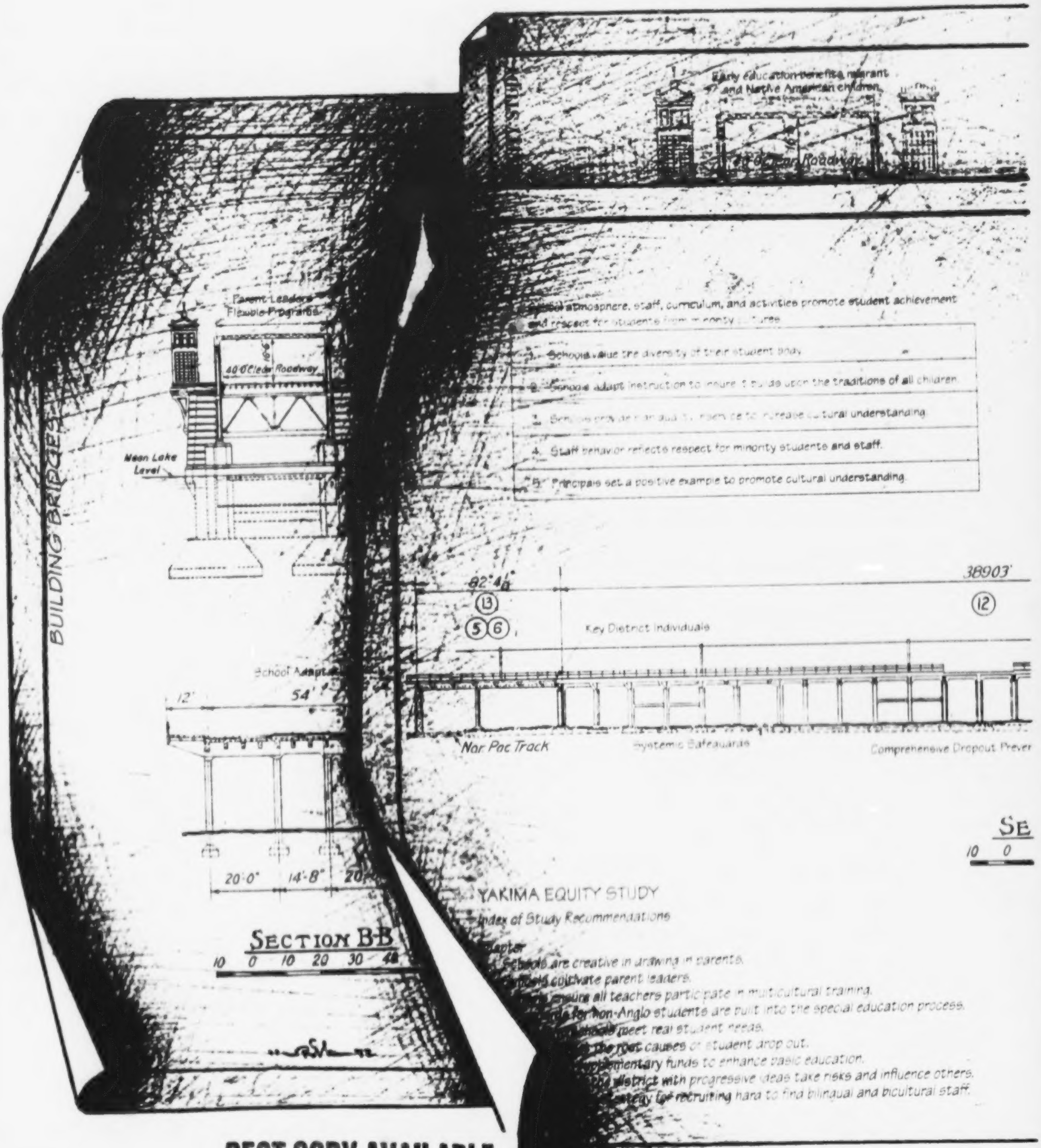
Early education benefits migrant and Native American children.
40'0" Clear Roadway
Parent Leaders
Flexible Programs
40'0" Clear Roadway
Mean Lake Level
BUILDING BRIDGES
School atmosphere, staff, curriculum, and activities promote student achievement and respect for students from minority cultures.
1. Schools value the diversity of their student body.
2. Schools adapt instruction to insure it builds upon the traditions of all children.
3. Schools provide ... to increase cultural understanding.
4. Staff behavior reflects respect for minority students and staff.
5. Principals set a positive example to promote cultural understanding.
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5 6
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12
Key District Individuals
School Adaptation
12'
54'
Nor Pac Track
Systemic Safeguards
Comprehensive Dropout Prever
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10 0
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14'-8"
20
SECTION B-B
10 0 10 20 30 40
YAKIMA EQUITY STUDY
Index of Study Recommendations
Chapter
Schools are creative in drawing in parents.
Schools cultivate parent leaders.
... ensure all teachers participate in multicultural training.
... for non-Anglo students are built into the special education process.
Schools meet real student needs.
... the root causes of student drop out.
... supplementary funds to enhance basic education.
... district with progressive ideas take risks and influence others.
... strategy for recruiting hard to find bilingual and bicultural staff.

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